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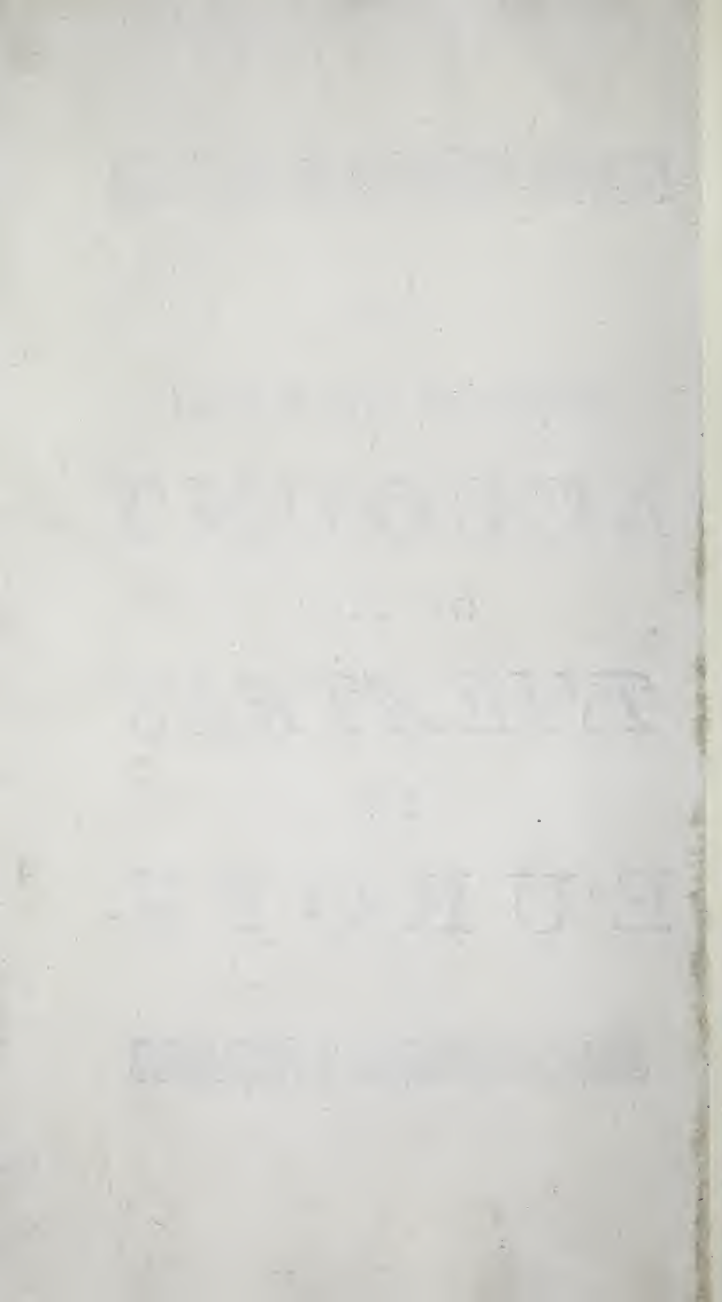
OF THE

*THEATRES*

I N

EUROPE.





A N  
*Historical and Critical*  
A C C O U N T  
O F T H E  
T H E A T R E S  
I N  
E U R O P E.  
V I Z.

*The Italian, Spanish, French,  
English, Dutch, Flemish, and  
German THEATRES.*

In which is contain'd

A REVIEW of the *Manner, Persons*  
and *Character* of the ACTORS ; intermix'd  
with many Curious DISSERTATIONS  
upon the D R A M A.

Together with

Two Celebrated E s s a y s :

V I Z.

An ESSAY on ACTION, or, 'The Art of  
Speaking in Public : And, A Comparifon  
of the Ancient and Modern D R A M A.

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*By the famous Lewis Riccoboni of the Italian  
Theatre at Paris.*

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The Whole illustrated with NOTES by the  
Author and Translator.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for T. WALLER, in the *Temple* ; and  
R. DODSLEY, in *Pall-Mall*, 1741.





T O

*Charles Fleetwood, Esq;*

*S I R,*

**A**S the THEATRE has ever been esteemed the best School for polishing and improving the Manners of a People, whatever tends to its Improvement must be allowed to be an Act of Public Spirit.

THE Author of the following Sheets has laid down the best and  
A. 3 most



## DEDICATION.

most sensible Rules for Action, and reduced the Knowledge of the Stage itself to a kind of Science ; therefore a Translation of what he has wrote on that Subject can be dedicated to none so properly as to a Gentleman who has so successfully endeavoured to render Theatrical Entertainments at once delightful and useful.

THE Revival, on the English Stage, of those Plays, which do Honour to Human Nature, is in a great measure owing to You : And if this Nation can claim a Merit superior to all others, from the Noble Monument which the PUBLIC LOVE has erected to their Author, You, Sir, may claim, with Justice, a large Share in that Merit, as You was not only one of the Trustees, but the most considerable Contributor in the Nation towards erecting the Monument

## DEDICATION.

ment of *Shakespear* in the beautiful Manner we now behold it.

A Manager of a Public Theatre must in that Character be allow'd to be a very important as well as useful Member of Society, since it is from thence that the *rising* Generation derives whatever is most graceful and agreeable in Life; and *others*, all that makes the Habit of Virtue amiable in the Eyes of the Public.

IN this View alone I take the Liberty of submitting to your Perusal, and recommending to your Protection, the following Pages, with my hearty Wishes that your Endeavours may meet with the Success they deserve; then will the Public, I will venture to say, have the agreeable Prospect of seeing the *English* Stage possess the same Superiority in the Polite World, that her Poetry has

## DEDICATION.

long acquired with every Man of Genius and Discernment, who understands and can feel its Beauties. Give me Leave to add another Wish, which is, that our Nation may then be as forward in rewarding the *Living*, as it has of late been grateful in honouring the *Dead* Supporters of her Stage.

*I am,*

S I R,

*Your most Obedient*

*Humble Servant,*

The Translator.



THE  
TRANSLATOR'S  
PREFACE.

**M**R. *Riccoboni*, Author of the following Pieces, has equally distinguish'd himself as an Actor, and a Critic. He is by Birth an *Italian*, he is now in the *Italian* Comedy at *Paris*, and his Turn for the Stage seems to have led him into a very tedious and laborious Pursuit of the Manner in which it may be render'd at once entertaining and improving. For this Purpose he visited all the Stages in *Europe*, and in the following Historical Account is the Result of all his curious Researches.

What is most for the Purpose of an *English* Reader to observe, in comparing them all, is, that the Civil and Political Manners of a People have ever form'd their Taste for the *Drama*. *Italy*, that great Source from whence was deriv'd the Light which struck up, what we may call, a new Creation  
in



## Translator's Preface.

in the Intelligent World by the Revival of Learning, Arts and Sciences, after a long Night of Barbarism, had then the Happiness of seeing the Family of *Medicis* flourish in *Florence* and at *Rome*, and the Example of these learned and munificent Princes was readily follow'd by every Man of Consideration or Note in that Nation. This naturally invited the middling and inferior People, which always compose the Bulk of Dramatic Audiences, into the same Pursuits, viz. a Thirst after Beauty and Truth in the Arts. Perhaps the Stage was not the principal Object, but as *Cicero* says, *Omnes Artes, quæ ad humanitatem pertinent, habent quoddam commune Vinculum, & quasi Cognatione quadam inter se continentur.* Thence it was, that the Drama shared largely in the great Reformation; and the *Italians* could then boast a Stage little inferior to that of *Greece* itself. But when amongst them *Delicacy* sunk into *Effeminacy*, when *Taste* degenerated into *Affectation*, and Knowledge into barren *Curiosity*, their Stage shar'd in the general Corruption; and its Decay was the first Symptom of that Degeneracy of Morals which has since made that People the easy Prey to every ambitious Invader.

Tho' the *Spanish* Drama was by no means ever regular, yet we find that it flourish'd and fell with the true Character of the Nation,

## Translator's Preface.

tion, which again was influenc'd by that of their Government. The Discoveries which the *Spaniards* made in the New World, and the enterprizing Genius of that People about an Age ago, may perhaps (more than to any other Cause) be attributed to a Romantic Spirit, deriv'd from their Gothic and Moorish Ancestors, encourag'd by their Princes, adopted by their Nobility, and propagated by their Stage. With the Decay of this Spirit their Stage faded in Proportion, and the Drama has now but a faint and feeble Existence in that Country.

In *France*, the Theatre, when at its Perfection, retain'd every Characteristic of the Court. The Reign of a young munificent Prince, succeeding a long Age of civil Discord, made Passion, Gallantry and Magnificence the chief Objects of their Drama. As their Court improv'd in Taste, their Drama approached nearer to Perfection, but both still retain'd the same Characters: *Passion* without *Elevation*, *Eloquence in Writing*, without *Strength of Genius*, and the *Flames of the Hero* blown by the *Sighs of the Lover*.

A Man well acquainted with *English* History and Policy must be sensible what a vast Variety of Turns the Character of this Nation has admitted of within these two hundred Years; if to this Knowledge he shall

## Translator's Preface.

shall join that of the *English* Drama, he will find the latter always partaking in the Character of the former; and both of them influenc'd by that of the Rulers of the Land, whether they acted on the Principles of Liberty, Prerogative or Tyranny. *Shakespear*, whose Genius is a Species of itself, could never have wrote as he did, nor mark'd his Characters so strongly, had he not catch'd them warm from Life, and liv'd at a Time when Virtue, Honesty and Courage, being in Fashion at Court, became familiar and daily Objects in common Life. The two Reigns succeeding to that of Queen *Elizabeth* produc'd no great Dramatic Genius that had not been before form'd and ripen'd by the Influence of that Princess and her Court. The Distractions and Usurpations after King *Charles's* Murder seem'd to extinguish every Thought of the Stage; and the Return of his Son, by introducing Lasciviousness and Degeneracy of Manners into the Nation, established the same Characters on the Theatre.

The Reign of King *James*, a Prince, with all his Imperfections, remarkably munificent to Poets, was too short for us to form any Conjecture about the Character which the Stage, had he continued longer upon the Throne, might have assumed. I shall leave the Reader to bring this Review lower, after acquainting



## *Translator's Preface.*

quainting him that there has not since been any remarkable Period, which might in any degree affect the Liberties and Interests of this Nation, in which the Stage had not had a considerable Influence.

From this short Review I hope it will appear of what Importance the Stage is even in a Political Sense, in keeping alive that Spirit which forms the true Character of every People, And I hope the following Pages may give some useful Hints towards a farther Improvement of it here in *Britain*.







THE  
AUTHOR'S  
PREFACE.

**T**HE Intention of this Preface is to convince the Public, that the Modern Stage, tho' vastly improved since its first Institution is yet far from boasting that Degree of Perfection that Men of Sense, Genius and Virtue require. It may be told me, that after foreseeing the Necessity of a farther Improvement, I ought to point out the Means necessary to attain it.

The Objection is both just and natural; and in Answer to it I design, in a separate Work, to consider the Means of reforming the Stage; but I thought it proper to begin with an Historical Account of the Theatres of Europe, comparing one with the other, and making critical Reflections on each. This I have done in a Manner which I hope will be at once agreeable and useful. A Point, which all Public Writers ought to have principally in View. If the  
French,

## Author's Preface.

French, who are naturally curious, shall endeavour to make themselves Masters of the Manners, the Customs, and the Forms of Foreign Theatres, can we imagine that their Neighbours will be backward in searching for the same Piece of Knowledge? By this means when the Taste shall begin to change, and when the Stage by degrees shall assume a new Form, as we have seen it do in less than an Age past, Posterity needs but to consult this small Performance, to instruct themselves of the Form and Manner of our present Drama, without taking the Trouble to examine a vast Number of Works of different Nations. I dare even hope that my Remarks may be of some Utility to Poets, in regulating their Conduct, and in directing them to that Method that is most agreeable to Reason, Religion, and Good Manners.

In this Account, I have plac'd the Italian and Spanish Theatre before those of France, England, Holland and Germany, because the most natural Order to be laid down in a Work of this kind is that of Time. The Italians and Spaniards were the first in this Way; and I should have acted preposterously had I, in this Work, given the Preference to others who succeeded them long after.



# REFLECTIONS

UPON

## DECLAMATION, or, *The Art of Speaking in Public, &c.*



PERSON who does not profess an Art, is excusable if he is ignorant of its Principles; but if he professes it, he is answerable to the Public if he is not completely Master of it both in Theory and Practice. The different Callings of Mankind in Civil Society are the Effects of the wise Dispositions of an all-ruling Providence, and it is blameable in us to neglect the most minute Consideration that may contribute either to our Instruction in the Theory, or Perfection in the Practice.

Experience however teaches us, that many look upon their own *Profession* as the *Tyrant* of their *Genius*, and exclaim against their Fate for subjecting them to Labours which are their Aversion, and leading them into

B

Pursuits



Pursuits in Life, in which, for want of the necessary Talents, they have no Prospect of succeeding. Hence it proceeds, that many neglect their own Profession, and are ignorant in the Rules of an Art, which has employed their whole Life to practise.

It would be easy to demonstrate the Folly of this; and the History of the great Men, who have excelled in the Sciences and fine Arts, are fertile in Examples of a contrary Conduct. Even Daily Experience may convince us, that a Man, whom Nature has indulged neither in the necessary Talents nor in the Inclination for an Art which he professes, can, by Application, supply these Defects so perfectly, as to arrive at the same Excellence with those who share largely in every Gift of Nature and Judgment, that is requisite to attain *Perfection*.

Among the Arts, there is one which is either quite given up, or neglected, the Moment that a Person, after a faint Essay in it, finds that he is destitute of the Qualifications that can make him shine. This proceeds from a common Prepossession that *Excellence* is not to be acquired, that *Defects* are not to be supplied, nor the *Difficulties* that lye in the way surmounted, without the Assistance of *Natural Genius*. The Art I mean is that of *Declamation*, an Art in which *Demosthenes* is a standing Instance to reproach

proach the *Indolent*, and a glorious Example to promote the *Industrious*.

The Art I treat of unites the Expression of Action to the Propriety of Pronunciation, in order to give the Sentiment its full Impression upon the Mind or Heart.

A tuneable Voice, a great and a graceful Deportment, are not sufficient to make a Speaker succeed in every Province of Oratory. We every Day see Speakers who with all these Advantages are grown grey in a false manner of Action, and this because they did not reflect that Nature does not bestow the Polish upon the Diamond she forms, and that it is Labour and Art which gives it Water and Lustre.

Could we trace the Progress of the greatest Orators of our Times, I am persuaded we should find that their first Essays were but faint and unpromising, nay, that their Manners were ungraceful and awkward, and that it required a long Course of Study and Application to correct the original Absurdities of their Action. The great Masters of Antiquity are thought by many to be but weak Authorities upon this Head; the *learned Few* indeed esteem them, but by most Speakers they are disregarded; as if every Deviation from their *Principles* was not at the same time a Deviation from *Truth* and *Nature*. Men of Genius, when they read  
 B 2 their



their Works, perceive that their Precepts are no other than a Repetition of what their own Understanding had before suggested; sometimes the same *Ideas* recur, which after a serious Examination we find were expressed by the Ancients; and this leads some Moderns into a Mistake that *Antiquity* is only an useless Piece of *Reading*; but I maintain that this is the very *Quality* which recommends it.

It is true, that when we reason upon an Art which derives its Principles wholly from Nature, a Man, tho' of a very indifferent Understanding, may acquire it of himself, but never can acquire it so as to *excell*; for tho' in Oratory the Uninstructed finds in his Mind every Faculty which is requisite to have a clear Conception of the fundamental Truths of that great Art, yet, would he be completely Master of them, he must be directed by Acquirements unattainable by an untutored Capacity. On the other hand, a Man of Genius ought to cultivate an Acquaintance with those ancient Masters, both as they regulate the Range of his Imagination, and supply Ideas to his Judgment.

*Eloquence* and *Action* were found necessary, and practised from the most remote Antiquity; they have civilized the Manners of the most barbarous, they have recommended themselves to the Esteem of the most polite, Nations.

Nations. The Art of *Declamation* is called Exterior Eloquence; and indeed the most forcible and the most irrefragable Arguments, when committed to Paper, can never affect us with the same Force as when animated by the Energy of Expression and the Beauty of Action. When these meet, we may pronounce the Person who possesses them a complete Speaker.

The Initiates in the Art of *Declamation* ought never to expose themselves to the Necessity of appearing in Public: For even their first Appearance demands the Abilities of a Master. I do not know if there is any thing in Life more irksome than to hear a Speech pronounced in a shocking manner: One can excuse himself from sitting a long time before a wretched Picture, or before a Statue where the Proportions are unjust and ill-disposed; but when a Man enters into an Assembly to hear a Speech or a Discourse, Good Manners oblige him to sit it out to the End, and it unfortunately happens that one has too many Opportunities of exercising his Patience, both by the frequent Occasions that offer, and the numerous Professors of the Art. The Pulpit, the Bar, Academies, Colleges, Clubs, Coffee-Houses, the Parliament and the Play-house have all their Votaries, who eagerly pursue this Art.

It is a Mistake if we imagine, among the

different Professions I have named, that there are any who are under no Necessity of cultivating this Art. Even Authors who only appear in Print are interested; for there is no Author, who, if he has any Friends, does not, before he submits his Work to the Censure of the Public, appoint a Set of Company to whom he causes his Work to be read, that from the Effects which it has upon them, he may form a Judgment of its Success with the Public. As to Poetical Compositions we need not hesitate a Moment; for your Poetical Gentleman, tho' perhaps he has no Intention to appear in Print, loves to have his Verses repeated all over the Town: Thus Writers both in Verse and Prose are under a kind of Necessity of understanding the Art of Speaking; for a bad manner of Pronunciation sometimes throws the Audience into a *Disgust* and *Languor*, which is but a very indifferent Omen of Success with the Public; tho' perhaps all the Matter is, that the Merits of the Work are not perceived thro' the Unskilfulness of the Repeater.

I am sensible that among the Ancients, whom we must own to be our Masters in the Art of *Declamation*, there were a great many bad Orators; therefore it is not at all surprizing that the same thing should happen now. I own it is not, and in some measure it is easily accountable for; but this Observation

vation can be no Excuse to those to whom Nature has denied Talents for succeeding in *Declamation*, yet persevere in a bad *Manner*, without endeavouring to correct it.

Besides, I comprehend under the Art of *Declamation*, every Intercourse of Conversation which is communicable by distinct, intelligible Language, no Discourse is so familiar, no Chat so indifferent and undesigning, as not to have its own Peculiarities of Expression pointed out by Nature herself; and it is a Mistake to imagine that an *Academic*, for Instance, is not obliged to be acquainted with the Rules of *Declamation*, provided every thing that he reads in the Assemblies where he is conversant, is delivered in an intelligible, and almost familiar, manner. I maintain the contrary, and affirm that there is no familiar Discourse but what has Modulations of Voices that are proper or improper for its Subject. Every Man is obliged to a minute Search into the proper manner of expressing even the smallest Trifle that falls in his way; if he wants that, the Matter he has to communicate cannot have its due Effect.

I shall not here point out that immense Variety of Accents of which the Voice is susceptible, and which ought to be employed on different Occasions in order to do Justice to the vast Crowd of Sentiments that arise in



the Mind. I am persuaded that it is impossible to write so upon this Subject as to leave nothing unsaid that may illustrate it; and to obviate every Difficulty that may occur. If *Quintilian*, treating of the Action of an Orator, says, that he ought not always to be tied down to Precepts, but sometimes to consult his own Genius, I believe I am justified in making the same Reflection upon the Turns of the Voice; I even think that Rules are unnecessary, because, generally speaking, these Turns are not to be regulated by Precepts, and are indeed infinite, if every one, following his own Genius, be it *severe* or *easy*, *soft* or *violent*, varies them suitably.

Nature in forming Mankind seldom throws even the most minute Parts of two different Men into the same Mould; we find it very rare that two Faces have a strong Resemblance of one another, but it never happens that they cannot be distinguished: We do not even find that the Eyes, the Hands, the Mouth, the Ears, or the Nose of two different Men are exactly the same in Colour, Form, and Symmetry. This wondrous Conduct of the Father of Nature, who has stamp'd such a Difference not only upon the *whole*, but upon the Members of a different Body, naturally leads us to another Reflection. Amidst that surprizing Variety we may observe, that the Voices of Men never  
exactly

exactly resemble one another, which can only proceed from the Difference betwixt the interior Organs of the Human Body in several Persons. How then can one imagine himself capable to mark out the different Turns and Cadencies peculiar to so many Millions of Men, each of whom has a different Voice adapted to his own particular Genius, and immediately under its Direction? It would require a great deal of Pains to point out in general those different Sounds, the *melancholy*, the *cheerful*, the *furious*, &c. and I even believe it is useless to put the Examples suitable to each in Writing; these must necessarily be conveyed by animated Expression, and their Propriety can only be perceived in the fine Action of an able Master.

Could we penetrate and lay open our Soul to the Bottom, it would be no hard Matter to perceive the Source of every Modulation of the Voice; she comprehends them all, because they are necessary to her communicating to us those wonderful Excellencies entrusted to her by the Author of Nature. But as the Matter into which she is pent obstructs her Operations, she must *shake her Plumes*, and detach herself as much as possible from the Substance which confines her. In order to succeed in this in some measure, we must first deliver the Soul from the Incumbrance  
of

of the Senses ; an Operation which, tho' violent, is by no means impracticable.

The Enthusiasm of Poets, and the deep Researches of Sages, in whatever Age they lived, were no other than the Effects of that profound Recollection of their intellectual Faculties which penetrated to the Bottom of the most retired Sentiments and Passions of the Soul. Here they surveyed Anger, Pity, Revenge, and the rest of the Affections, undisguised by Custom, and unfettered by Interest. Thus every Expression, every Lineament of the Pictures, which they gave of the Human Soul, was *warm, animated and just*, because all drawn from the Life. Thus the Readers found nothing in their Works that could either be *improved, mended, or corrected*.

It was astonishing sometimes to surprise these great Men in the *Crisis* of their *Enthusiasm*, when they appear'd quite *absent*, without the Use either of Eyes or Ears. They were looked upon as Fools till they were awakened and roused from their profound Meditations ; and then they at once left their beautiful *Visions* and enchanting *Ideas*, into which they had been worked by their long Application. A Loss that was generally irreparable ; for too often it happened that these Sages and Poets could never more recall those exquisite Pleasures of Imagination, nor recollect the instructive Reflections in which  
their



their Souls were wrapt before they awakened.

The Ancients termed *Poetry* a *Divine Language*, an Epithet that has been adapted by Posterity; the first Divines among the Heathens were all Poets, they treated of their Gods in their Poems, and their Oracles were all delivered in Verse. But whence comes it that we, who have a *System of Faith*, different from that of the Heathens, should likewise call fine Poetry a *Divine Language*? For my own Part I am convinced, that the chief Reason, which both the Ancients and we had to give it this Appellation, was because Poetry is regarded as a Language above Humanity; since in effect, when the noblest *Enthusiasm* of the Poet speaks the Language of the Soul, we hear something that is amazing, and which can admit of no other Character but that of *Divine*.

But how can we repeat or represent such Compositions, otherwise than by cloathing them in the *Language of the Soul* likewise? Hence it appears to me by an unavoidable Consequence that their Orators, Sages, and Poets entered into the same *Enthusiasm* when they repeated, which they felt when they composed, their Works. If the Soul which inspired their Thoughts equally operated in pronouncing them, their Pronunciation must have been always just and infinitely  
variated

variated, from the most sublime Heroics down to the most familiar Prose. But one may easily conclude, that the Enthusiasm they fell into in *declaiming* was far less *intense* than that which assisted in *composing*. Nature dictates this, and we see it every Day, at least in appearance, put in Practice.

Every Orator after he salutes his Audience remains for some Moments motionless and silent; very often he shuts his Eyes; and it is generally believed that he does this in order to give the Spectators time to compose themselves, that they may be more attentive to what he has to deliver: I even think that it is with this View that the greatest Number of Orators observe such a Practice; but both the Speakers and Hearers are under a Mistake. Those Moments which the Orator observes to himself ought to be employed in *recollecting* his *Ideas*; and a Minute is sufficient for him to forget all Nature, and to fill his Mind entirely with his Subject. If he afterwards opens his Eyes when he begins his Discourse, he seems to send them over all, but fixes them on no particular Object; and if by Accident his Looks shall rest on one Point, he distinguishes it by no extraordinary Emotion; and this perhaps happens in the very Crisis of his Recollection. It is then that entering upon his Discourse, be his Subject what it will, he feels that *Enthusiasm* which

is necessary to make him declaim in the *Sounds of the Soul*.

It is not a random Observation when we commonly say, *Such a Speaker does not animate his Expression; or that there are some Passages in such a Work that ought to be more animated*. It is because the *Enthusiasm* I have mentioned is wanting both in the Composition and Delivery, and neither the *Speaker* nor *Author* have endeavoured to *animate themselves*, that is, to write and to speak according to the pure genuine Sentiments of the Soul, detached as it were from all Matter.

Words alone are not the only Means by which the Art of *Declamation* expresses the Sentiments of the Soul: Nature has implanted in the Eyes suitable Expressions which convey the Sentiments of the Soul to the Mind; and we may venture to say, that in Speaking and Action the Eyes possess the fairest Place. *Cicero* and *Quintilian* have not forgot their Effects; and at present how many Orators do we see whose Excellencies would be more complete, did they not shut their Eyes during half the time they are speaking? I shall not advise an Orator to go too much into this Method, whatever Reasons may be given for the Practice; whether that an Orator, being conscious of a treacherous Memory, is afraid that he may be  
discon-

disconcerted ; or that he imagines, shutting his Eyes for an Instant, and then opening them all of a sudden, they serve as the Lightning that precedes the Bolt, which the Eloquence of the Orator is ready to discharge, and which indeed is a Masterpiece of Action. In short, whether it is the Effect of *Precaution* or *Art*, it is a Practice that is both ways dangerous ; for by a Speaker frequently shutting his Eyes, his Expression in a great measure loses its Force.

The Eyes therefore ought indispensibly to attend the *Enthusiasm* of Action, because it is certain that by them the most inconsiderable Sentiments of the Soul may be expressed. We may even go so far as to say, that without the *silent Language* of the Eyes *Words* would sink under *Expression* ; that almost *Divine Expression* communicated by, and imparted to, the Soul ; and we ought not one Moment to doubt that both in the great and the minute Parts of Oratory, the Eyes infinitely contribute to the Success of the Speaker. If we observe narrowly, we shall find that our Eyes, without the Help of Words, can discover Fear, Fury, Shame, Resolution, Archness, Tenderneſs, Indifference, Envy, Joy, Grief, and that inexpressible Number of Passions that crowd the Soul of Man.

If a Speaker is deeply skilled in his Art  
he



he will not be satisfied with barely making the Expression of his Eyes attend that of his Tongue, but take care that the former shall have a Moment's Start of the latter. For Instance, in a Period, which ought to set out with a burst of Anger, if the Speaker, in a little Pause which he artfully makes before he speaks, shall by a single Look express his Anger, he can so effectually prepossess the Spectator with what he is to say, that he will all of a sudden mould him into that Temper which most easily admits of the Impressions that he designs to convey in the rest of his Discourse. The same Observation holds of all the other Passions.

Amongst all the expressive Operations of the Eye, there is one of great Consequence. A Speaker ought to take care not to work himself up to Tears: Yet if they shall naturally flow, he should not use the least Efforts to stop them. The Grimaces of a Speaker, who forces himself to cry, are either *disgustful* or *ridiculous*; but when his Tears flow spontaneously, it rarely happens that the Emotions which attend them are *disagreeable*. The Speakers who endeavour to weep never can thoroughly feel what they say; for when it is the Soul that speaks, Tears require no intermediate Assistance to make them flow. If they are affected, the Cheat is easily discovered, and the Effect they have is either

none



none at all, or very bad; but if they are natural, they touch the Heart, and steal the good Wishes of the Spectators.

One can scarcely be persuaded that the rest of the Face enjoys the same noble Qualities of the Eyes, for expressing the Sentiments of the Soul; yet it contributes so much to Expression, that the Words and the Eyes can never of themselves succeed without its Help. We often find in a Speaker a Set of inflexible Features which the Spectators express by a Phrase which we daily hear, *An unmeaning Face*. The Language of the Face consists in the Muscles of which it is composed, with the Blood that animates them; and when these two are put in Action, they both by their Colour and Movement very sensibly paint the Sentiments of the Soul. The great *Shakespear* contains many Instances of this kind: In that Scene where *Othello* murders his Wife, after he gives her a Hint of his Intention, he makes her say:

— *And yet I fear you, for you're fatal then  
When your Eyes roll so. Why I should fear  
I know not,*

*Since Guilt I know not: Yet I feel, I fear.*

Oth. *Think on thy Sins.*

Des. *They're Loves I bear to you.*

Oth. *Ay! and for that thou dy'st.*

Des.

Def. *That Death's unnatural, that kills  
for loving.*

Alas! why gnaw you so your nether Lip?  
*Some bloody Passion shakes your very Frame:  
These are Portents: But yet I hope, I hope,  
They do not point on me.*

In *Henry VIII.* when that Prince leaves  
*Wolfey*, the latter says,

— *He parted frowning from me, as if Ruin  
Leapt from his Eyes.*

But the finest Instance of that kind I know,  
is in *King John*, when *Hubert* acquaints  
that Prince with the Death of *Arthur*. The  
Earl of *Pembroke*, who had never seen *Hubert*  
before, observing *King John* and him in close  
Conference, speaking of *Hubert*, says to the  
Earl of *Salisbury*,

*The Image of a wicked heinous Fault  
Lives in his Eye; that close Aspect of his  
Does shew the Mood of a much troubled  
Breast.*

*And I do fearfully believe 'tis done,  
What we so fear'd he had a Charge to do.*

Sal. *The Colour of the King doth come and  
go,  
Between his Purpose and his Conscience,  
Like Herald's 'twixt two dreadful Battles sent:  
His Passion is so ripe, it needs must break \*.*

It would be endless to multiply Instances of this kind from this Divine Writer: The only Reflection we shall make is, That these Passages shew to what *Excellence, Action* may be carried, if it copies immediately after *Nature*. We may observe at the same time that when *Shakespear* wrote, it is probable that the Actors, who played the Parts of King *John, Henry, Hubert, and Othello*, must have entered so far into Nature, as to be able to express by their Features, and that too at the proper Instant, those Passions which the Poet has so beautifully described in his Lines. Otherwise the Action must have been miserably faulty, and the Excellence of the Poet would have chiefly served to point out the gross Defects of the Actor, by putting the  
Audience

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\* The Author in the Original gives a Quotation from *Racine*, but it falls so infinitely short of what we find in almost every good *English* Dramatic Poet, that I believe the Reader will, when he looks into the Original, easily pardon my supplying it from *Shakespear*. I have likewise ventured to throw what he infers, from the Instance he brings, into another Light which may accommodate it more to our Stage, and avoid a Repetition of some Part of what goes before.

Audience in mind of what the latter ought to do. I am of opinion that the greatest Actor, when he is to play a Part in a Scene where this dumb Action happens, has Reason to be strongly alarmed with the Apprehensions of his not succeeding. It is not enough that he feels all that a Man in the Circumstance of the Character he represents may be supposed to feel, but he must likewise feel for others. This requires the deepest Recollection and the most exquisite Sense of the Passions of Mankind; a Sense that can arise only from a humane Disposition, for one of the chief Characters of *Ill-nature* is to be *insensible* of another's Anguish. Therefore what *Quintilian* says of an Orator may be justly applied to an Actor, that he ought to be a Man not only of great Good-Sense, but of great Good-Nature. His Business is to move, and it is by the Language of the Heart alone that he can hope to succeed.

We must however take Care to distinguish the Difference betwixt an Alteration of the Features, in order to express the Sentiments of the Soul, and the Grimaces that attend a *Play of the Muscles*. The first makes a *Speaker valuable*; the other makes a *Scaramouch diverting*. If a Man enters strongly into a proper Enthusiasm, and speaks in the Accents of the Soul, his Features will naturally form themselves into an Agreement with



his Subject by the Alteration both of his Colour and Muscles. This Correspondence of the Eyes and the rest of the Features is absolutely necessary in Expression, in the same manner as in Music, the Charms of a fine Voice are heightened by the Instruments that play in Concert; for if the Eyes and Features do not correspond with the Action, it is the same as if the Violin and Bass, which play along with a fine Voice, should leave off playing; and thus both the Pleasure of the Music must be diminished, and its Effects weakened.

If the Movements of the Body and the Arms do not possess so conspicuous a Place in the Art of *Declaiming* as the Operations of the Eyes and Features, they are, however, neither useless nor despicable. A perfect Speaker, who has not the Advantages of a fine Attitude and graceful Air, loses a great deal of his Merit; the Arms as well as the Face have their Eloquence; and if the Spirit of this Art, when strong and lively, adds no Grace to Nature by the Management of the Arms, it must be owned that she at the same time communicates less Force to her. For I readily agree that to move the Arms with Dignity and Grace is the Gift of Nature alone. It is a Right of Nature to form the human Body in what manner she pleases. We see two Persons equally well made, yet the



the Motions and Deportment of the one may be extremely awkward in every thing he does, and those of the other very genteel and agreeable. If an Orator happens not to be endowed by Nature with the Talent of properly managing his Arms, he is defective in a very material Point. The Assurances he may borrow from an assiduous Practice before his Looking-Glass, and great Application, may give him an affected, but never the true, Motion of the Hand and Arm; and tho' it is said that *Demosthenes* took the Advice of a Mirror in regulating his Movements, I am of a quite different Opinion. Who knows if the Pains he took were not in order to bring to Perfection the Talents which he already possessed, rather than to pursue those which he did not possess; and that he did not chuse this Method to increase the Beauty rather than to correct the Faults of his Action? 25-067

An Orator who is conscious that his Action is imperfect in this respect ought, instead of practising the *Action* of the *Arms*, to restrain himself from moving them at all; all his Cares ought to be directed to bring the other Parts of his Action to as high a Degree of Perfection as possible. If he once can attain to speak with the *Enthusiasm* of the Language of the Soul, he will, without his own perceiving it, move his Arm, for the

Soul will then direct it, and therefore his Gesture never can be unjust.

As to those to whom Nature has been so favourably partial as to endow them with this Embellishment, tho' they are under no Necessity of studying their Gesture, yet they ought to take care not to be too lavish of their Talents. It happens to them as it does sometimes to certain Speakers, who having deep Lungs and a strong Pipe, are always plying them with so much Violence, that they lose the Merit of giving to their Expressions that Variety of Accents, so necessary for painting and understanding their Thoughts; in the same manner a Speaker, who is too lavish of his Gestures, finds so much Work for the Eyes of his Auditors that they are quite fatigued, and their Thoughts wandering and confused.

The Turns of Expression, and the Motions of the Body and the Arms, exactly correspond and go hand in hand with one another; so great is the Harmony with which they act, that if the one is faulty it immediately affects the other; for let the one of these Qualities be ever so perfect, it never can prevent the Disadvantage that arises from a Defect in the other. And indeed, how can the Eyes of a Spectator, for Instance, be agreeably entertained by the great or graceful Management of the Body or the Arms,

or prepare themselves to communicate to the Mind the Pleasure which she ought naturally to feel, if at the same Instant his Ears shall be struck with the Sound which gives his Mind a Sensation quite different from what she expected to receive from the Eyes?

In every Part of the Structure of the human Body, from the greatest to the least, it is easy to discover the Finger of a Divine Operator in forming that Masterpiece of the Creation. We see it so ordered by Nature, that all these Parts of our Body concur in the Art of Speaking. It is not so with other Arts, not even in those that are mechanical. *Painting* \*, for Instance, employs only one  
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\* The Author in this Observation is too partial to his own favourite Art. Had he consulted the History of *Painting* in his own Country, he would have found Painters, whose Senses were as much abstracted by the Enthusiasm of their Art, as any Poet, Philosopher, or Actor that ever was. And indeed, according to the Principles which he himself has laid down, it requires as deep a Recollection of Imagination, and as thorough an Acquaintance with the Images imprest upon the Heart, to throw them out in *Painting* as it does in *Poetry* or *Acting*. Let any Man of Taste or Genius but consider the Divine Enthusiasm that appears in the Figure of St. Paul preaching, in the *Cartoons* at Hampton-Court; let him consider the Attention, the Recollection, and the Reverence of the Spectators: Let him look upon any other Piece in that Gallery, he will find in every one of them Expressions which demonstrates that *Raphael* has possessed, besides the *Talents* of the finest Painter that ever was, those that distinguish the best *Poets*, *Orators*, and *Actors*.

*Vassari*, in his Lives of the Painters, informs us, that when *Michael Angelo* worked as a Statuary, he appeared to be quite  
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Part of our Senses; and when one paints he can sing, talk, hear, &c. The same may be said of the other Arts. In the Art of Action, even Reflection is forbidden; and if that Operation of the Soul, which is so absolutely Master of our Will, shall come athwart our Mind, and surprize us while we are speaking, she is forced back; because the Intensity of what we are about drives her out of our Head and disclaims her Company. Nor indeed are we Masters of our Reflection even in other human Operations, during which, Thoughts crowd upon one another against our Will. Here we may conclude that this Art, which as it were enchants our whole Senses, is almost *Divine*; that our Soul is the *Agent*, and our Members and Organ the *Ministers* she employs. I will therefore repeat it, that we can declaim only in the Accents of the Soul, and that without these there can be no Action.

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an Enthusiast, and not possess of the same Degree of Reason as other Men, and it has been a very general, and a very just Observation of the most eminent Painters, that when they wanted to give a strong Expression to any Passion, their own Features involuntarily altered according to the Resemblance they wanted to create.

Our Author's Observations, though he confines them to Action, are applicable, not only to Painting and Statuary, but to Music, Architecture, and to every Art which has *Beauty* and *Truth* for its Foundation. This Application indeed can only be partial, but had our Author acknowledged it, it would have been so far from disparaging, that it must have done Honour to his Profession.

I have elsewhere observed that the Theatrical Objects ought to be rendered very strong and striking, even tho' the Rules of Nature should be a little transgressed, that the Expression and Action may not be lost to such Spectators as sit at a Distance from the Stage. I say the same thing both with regard to the Pulpit and the Bar; but both the Speaker and the Player ought to do this with great Caution, and only to a certain Degree, lest he disgust the Spectators who are more near, by introducing too great a Deviation from *Nature*, and too strong an Inconsistence with *Truth*.

I shall not take notice of the indispensable Necessity of a proper Pronunciation, because all the World is convinced of it; only I must observe, that the Man who cannot correct the Viciousness of *habitual Dialect*, or *defective Nature*, ought never to act in Public, because he runs the risque of exciting Laughter when he ought to draw Tears.

In short, to render the Proposition I have advanced about Declaiming in the *Language of the Soul*, on which the good or bad Success of a Speaker depends, more intelligible, I shall once for all take notice that this kind of Declamation is no other than *one's feeling the thing he pronounces*. I do not by this mean that which is commonly called *Good Sense* in speaking, and an intelligible manner  
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in delivering, because to *feel* is another thing; and in order to demonstrate it, I must make a Digression.

It is certain that an Orator, when upon an important Point, ought to endeavour to work his Audience into a Perswasion that he believes what he advances. This is the *whole* of his Art. A Man commonly before he alters his Opinion is in some doubt; he endeavours to inquire of himself whether the Change of his Sentiments is founded on Reason, or upon the enchanting Delusion of the Speaker. The Speaker is therefore obliged in his own Vindication to prevent such a Suspicion from gaining Ground in the Mind of his Audience, or the Judges. For this end he must speak so naturally as to force, as it were, the Spectators to believe every thing he is then saying, and that he speaks from the Heart. For if the Audience, instead of hearing, were to read what he delivers, they would infallibly presume that, in composing it, a thousand Arts and Subtleties had been employed to make it succeed. On the contrary, that which seems to be as it were poured forth Extempore, carries with it an Air of *Truth* and *Sincerity*, which prepossesses the Audience in favour of every thing that is said. If therefore a Speech is thus far just to Nature, the Illusion is then complete; and if it shall be afterwards  
- printed,

printed, the Justness with which the Orator delivered it will be still admired, a Circumstance that is highly advantagious to his Character. If a Player in his Part shall act so as to persuade us that the Characters we see are not *fiſtitious* but *real*; if a Counsel speaking for a Client shall succeed so far as to convince the Judge and the Audience that it is the injured Person himself who petitions for Redress, or the Offender who pleads for Mercy; I repeat it again, the Illusion becomes then complete, then all that is *said* is *felt*, and every thing passes in the *Language of the Soul*.

It is easy to understand that all I have said of Speaking in general is applicable equally to *prophane* and *sacred* Orators; however I cannot dispense with touching more particularly on what regards the latter.

As to the manner in which a Preacher ought to deliver himself, his Subject is too serious not to make us sensible that it ought to be expressed in Accents *simple*, indeed, but full of *Dignity* and always *just*. Among those who mount the Pulpit, a great many form themselves upon *Theatrical Action* without following that natural Method commonly practised at the Bar. Therefore I think it will be necessary for us to examine this *Theatrical Action*, its Strength, and the Nature of its *Accents*, before we can decide whether

whether it is proper for the Pulpit. Except in Theatrical Declamation, (where every Period commonly begins or ends with an Elevation of the Voice) it must be granted that Words, when protracted and drawled out with a *Sameness of Accent*, as well as the Straining of the Voice, whether too vehement or ill-judged, are the perfect Aversion of Nature. A manner of speaking different from what is practised, either in Music or in Speeches, is required in Tragedy. A Lawyer therefore will never think proper to plead in the studied affected manner of Theatrical Declamation. Orators have in all Ages laid it down as a Maxim, that when they speak, it is as Man to Man, and that therefore they ought to communicate their Thoughts in no other Accents than those which are natural to Mankind.

I am persuaded that it has been a great Error of the *French* Divines in imagining true *Theatrical Declamation* to be such as is practised in *France*. The great Business of the Stage is, as I have already said, to enchant the Spectators into a Persuasion that the Tragedy they are beholding is no *Fiction*, and that they who speak and act are not *Players*, but *real Heroes*. But Theatrical Declamation in *France* has quite a contrary Effect; the first Words that are heard evidently persuade the Audience that all is a *Fiction*, and the  
 Players



Players speak in Accents so extraordinary, and so removed from Truth, that it is impossible for one to be imposed upon. Is this Theatrical Declamation then a proper Pattern for the Pulpit? No, surely. A *prophane Orator* is under no such strict Obligation to declaim according to Truth, and in the *Accents of the Soul*, as a *sacred Orator* is; and it is certain that a Preacher who shall deliver a Sermon in the manner of a *Theatrical Declamation* can never make himself be felt. It may be here objected, that if an *Actor* can touch the Passions in a *Tragedy*, a Preacher may do the same in a *Sermon*, if he is a perfect Master of *Theatrical Declamation*. I answer in the Negative, and my Reasons are as follow:

Most Part of *Spectators* in *France* are incapable of discerning that which may be called the *Justness of Action*. They are early accustomed to *Theatrical Declamation*: Young People do not trouble their Heads much about Reasoning, and they grow old before they make any solid Reflections upon this Point. If an Audience thus disposed is touched in seeing a *Tragedy*, it is because they are under an *habitual Illusion*, in which *Truth* has no Share. All the World knows that *Cæsar*, *Alexander*, *Hannibal*, &c. were Men like us; and every Body is persuaded that they felt their strongest Passions, and performed

formed their most Heroic Actions in the same manner as the great Men of our own Age; yet the very Spectators who are convinced of this, being prejudiced in their Youth in favour of the bombast manner of *Theatrical Declamation*, form their Ideas of these Heroes according to the Appearance they make, as personated by *Players*: That is, as Men quite above the common Level of Mankind, with a manner of walking, speaking, and looking, different from the rest of the World. But according to those fictitious Ideas which the Spectators have adopted, and which deeply affect them, they form so strong an Illusion, that they suffer themselves to be transported beyond Truth in every thing they see and hear. If *Players* therefore touch others with the Part they represent in Tragedy, it is only because by Habit the Audience reconcile themselves to the unnatural Method of Declamation, and thus the Effect that it ought to produce, by degrees, wears off. For could they see Nature and Truth in their genuine Appearances, they would soon shake off the Prejudices of Custom. I shall only give two Instances of what I have advanced here, which ought to be transmitted to Posterity, and eternally engraved upon the Minds of *Players*. Whoever remembers to have seen *Betterton*, or *Booth*, in *England*, must readily own that the whole House was touched by their  
simple



simple natural manner of Action; and Good Sense dictates to us that we never seek for Pleasure in *Fiction* when we can find it in *Truth*, especially in a Profession such as that of a Player, which borrows its chief Excellencies from Nature herself.

In *France*, when a Stranger goes to a Play-house for the first time, he is extremely disgusted with their *Theatrical Declamation*. It is true that the *universal Applause* which their Actors meet with, sometimes debauches them into the prevailing Taste of the Country; but I have found at *Paris* a great many *Frenchmen* who never go to see a Tragedy from an Aversion to this kind of Declamation, but it is an Aversion which prevails only with Men of great Genius and Taste, who abhor, they say, to see *Nature* and *Truth* so mangled upon the Stage. How is it possible then that such Declamation should be a proper Pattern for a Preacher, who, if by a mistaken manner of Pronunciation he disguises the great Truths he delivers, may indeed convince the Reason, but never can touch the Passions, of his Audience? A *Grain of Falseness*, if I may express myself so, will sow a whole *Lump of Truth*, and the human Understanding can never bear to see them associated.

It is likewise incontestibly true that the general manner of Declaiming in a Preacher, tho'

tho' it ought always to be true and natural, yet ought still to admit of three different Distinctions in its Character. One accommodated to *Sermons*, one to *Panegyrics*, and one to *Funeral Orations*. *Zeal*, *Admiration*, and *Grief*, ought to regulate the manner in which these three Subjects are treated, so that the Speaker may always sustain, and in his Discourse give the Predominance to that Manner which is most suitable to his Subject.

It is easily perceived that each of these three Manners, *Zeal*, *Admiration*, and *Grief*, does not exist independant of the other, and that an Orator may have occasion to practise them all in handling the same Subject. For Instance, in a Sermon where *Zeal* ought to predominate, the Accents of *Admiration* and *Grief*, as well as other Passions, are admitted according as the Thoughts, that fall in, require. In the same manner in *Panegyric*, where the predominant manner ought to be that of *Admiration*, at the glorious Actions of the Person who is celebrated; all other Manners, such as *Zeal* and *Grief*, may be employed as Occasion offers, and may even be indispensible. I say the same thing with regard to *Funeral Sermons*; and tho' it would seem that they are of the same Nature with *Panegyric*, and that *Admiration* of the great Actions of the Persons who are celebrated to the Audience should have a large Share in  
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the manner of delivering them, yet here Grief ought to be the predominant Manner. For it is certain that tho' the glorious Actions of Saints and Heroes claim the same Degree of *Admiration*, yet it is with this Difference, that we remember the first with † *Admiration* mixt with *Joy*, because they are looked upon as happy in Heaven; and the great Actions of the others must be celebrated with *Admiration* mixed with *Grief*, arising from the Remembrance of the Loss we have just sustained by their Death. These are the Reasons why *Grief* ought to predominate in a *Funeral Oration*, not only over *Admiration*, but over all the other Manners that fall within the Compass of an Orator's Practice. Thus, as to the different Manner of employing these three different Passions, the Art of an Orator consists in disposing the immense Variety of the Accents which he uses so as that they may never in the least obscure that which ought to predominate in his Subject. I shall say no more on this Subject in Writing, because the most instructive Precepts on that Point, and even those that may be really useful, ought to be communicated by the

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Voice,

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† The Reader thro' all this Passage will no doubt make Allowance for our Author's being a *Roman-Catholic*, and living in *France*.

Voice, as I have observed before, and not by Paper.

As I have said in the Beginning of these Reflections, that a young Orator ought never to appear in Public, until he has attained a certain Degree of Perfection; I own I cannot help repeating the same thing here: He ought not to expect that his Audience will sit patiently hearing him for thirty Years, till he has obtained Perfection in his Art; for I grant he may acquire it by long Experience. A young Orator may answer me, that it is the *Exercise of an Art that forms the Artist*. I know it well, and according to the Reflections I have made, I know likewise that in practising it he ought to follow the Method of *Demosthenes*. This great Man, it is well known, set out by practising his Art two or three times in Public; he found he did not succeed, he then shut himself up for some Years, and then emerg'd into Public the Wonder and Miracle of *Greece*. Let a young Orator do the same, let him make an Essay of his Art in Public, and if he finds he is destitute of Talents to succeed, let him either throw it entirely up, or never appear again until he is a complete Master. How absurd must a contrary Conduct be! The great Men of all Sciences are at Pains to conceal the Productions of their Youth, because they know them to be imperfect. Painters, Sculptors,



tors, and Poets never put their Name to their first Effays. Workmen can never pass for Masters if they don't produce some finished Masterpiece, which proves that they deserve that Title. And shall a young Orator be so imprudent as to declaim in Public, without having beforehand exercised his Talents and corrected his Faults in Private?

It is amazing that in all Ages and Nations of polite Learning, no Schools for *Declamation* have ever yet been established. The Masters of public Schools and Colleges give Boys some slight Notions which they never reduce to Practice in any of the Stages of Civil Life; but indeed as the principal End of their Employment is to teach the dead Languages, they have no Time to bestow on other Studies; besides the Boys whom they have commonly under their Care are too young and incapable either to make solid Reflections by themselves, or to comprehend the Precepts of their Master. Should an old Orator fill a public Chair and teach the Art of *Declamation*, he would be as useful to Society as most of the fine Establishments that are in great Cities. Young People would then study Oratory when most of their other Studies were over; when they were advanced in Age, and consequently more capable to comprehend the Reasons that would be offered, but above all, they



would retain the natural and striking Impressions conveyed by animated Speech in the Practice of *Declaiming* in all the different Branches of that Art.



**THE**



# THE ITALIAN THEATRE.



THE Remarks which in another Work I have † already made upon the Rise of the Drama in *Italy*, sufficiently justify me in supposing, that it has admitted of no Interrup-

tion since it ceased to be exhibited on the *Latin* Theatres. But when it forgot its original Grandeur, it grew so low as to strole from Town to Town, where it was performed in their open Places; and tho' the insipid, indecent Buffoneries, represented in this manner, are far from deserving the Name of Comedies, yet we can in them at least trace the Seeds of that barbarous Weed which throve so well, till abolished by Religion.

The *Italian Drama* languished for a long time in this Condition, till towards the Beginning of the twelfth Century; it then by Degrees recovered its Vigour, and admitted the Embellishments of Dialogue, but as

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† See my History of the *Italian Theatre*.

yet it was only exhibited in private Houses. About that Time, taking Advantage of Subjects and Characters borrowed from Religion, the Drama began to appear with more Pomp, and the Invention of Printing introduced her to the Acquaintance of the Public: Some Comedies printed about sixty Years after this great Discovery, that is, about the Year 1520, are yet extant; and tho' the Names of the Authors are unknown, yet it is easy to discern from the Uncouthness of the Language that they must have been composed more than a Century before, and their very Titles imply that they were printed long after they were wrote. It is therefore very probable that there were some others worse wrote, consequently older than these, and perhaps now extant in Manuscript; but the printed Comedies which I speak of are so licentious, both in the Conduct and Sentiments, that from them we may easily form a Judgment of the Merit of those which preceded them.

*Bibiena* in his *Callandra*, *Machiavelli* in his *Mandragola* and *Clitia*, and *Ariosto* in his *five Comedies*, with the other best Dramatic Writers who flourished in the first forty Years of the sixteenth Century, for the most part, formed themselves upon these ancient Models in their own Language, tho' full of Impiety and Indecency; all they have done being to correct the Form and

Conduct

Conduct of the Fable in order to render it more regular and complete. But notwithstanding the undoubted Proofs which may be drawn from their ancient Comedies that have come to our Hands in Print, (and of a much older Date than the Age of *Callendra*, which was acted for the first time towards the End of the 15th Century,) the *Italians* date the Commencement of this Drama no higher than that Period; and they reckon all the Pieces written in the preceding Ages to be no better than so many *Farces*, tho' they are very long, and divided into *five Acts*. Some Pieces of this kind are called in the Title-Pages *Farces*, and others, *Comedies*. It is likewise remarkable that a great many others in the Title-Pages are named *Farces*, and in the Epilogue, *Comedies*. From this, it is plain, that their ancient Poets, by these two Words, understood the same thing. But the *Italian* Writers, without reflecting upon this Circumstance, very violently deny them the Rank of *Comedies*, and place them only in the Class of *Farces*. For my own Part, by their Leave, I call them all *Comedies*, but *defective* ones, and the Product of an *Infant* THEATRE.

The Modern *Italian* Writers have chosen to stifle the Merits of their Predecessors to recommend their own Correctness in Dramatic Performances. It appears as if they



had it in View to conceal from the Public the Writings for the Stage almost for two Ages, that they may glory in those of one Period which does them Honour; their Aim being to persuade the World that the *Infancy* of their *Theatre* produced only *Masterpieces*, and not *trifling, lame Performances*, as has been the Case of all the Theatres in the World, since the Time of the *Greeks* and *Latins*. We can easily perceive that these proceeded gradually, and for a long time as if it were in Leading-strings, before they arrived to Perfection, or even before they had corrected their original Absurdities. As therefore the ancient *Italian* Comedies, which have come to our Hands, and which are not very numerous, are designed in their Frontispieces only under the Title of the *Ancients*, but without any Information to the Reader, or the least Light by which we can be enabled to determine their Date, let us enquire if their Representations of Subjects taken from Scripture can furnish us with any Helps for ascertaining the Period that gave Rise to the Modern *Italian* Drama.

Anciently the Passion of our Lord was represented at *Rome* in the *Collisee*. The most celebrated *Italian* Authors leave us no room to doubt of this, and if we take the Pains to examine them, we shall find in their Works plain and indisputable Proofs of the Point  
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we are now treating; but nothing confirms this Truth more strongly than the Tragedies that are extant upon the Passion of our Lord.

It is no less certain that the Custom of representing the Passion of our Lord was entirely abolished towards the End of the Pontificate of *Paul* the third, that is to say, in the Year 1546, or at most in 1549. This we expressly learn from the \* Authors here referred to; but it will be very difficult for us to determine at what time the Custom of representing the Passion commenced, or to ascertain its Original. We find indeed that it is of old standing; for the Authors I have quoted, unanimously concur in favour of its Antiquity: They fix the Period when these Tragedies were abolished, but leave us entirely in the dark as to the time of their Rise, probably because they themselves were so: Therefore all we can advance on this Head must be founded on mere Conjecture.

Some able Antiquaries of Modern *Rome* are however of Opinion, that the Representations

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\* Andreas Fulvius, Page 146.

La Description de Rome, 8vo. Printed Anno 1643, Page 487.

*Il Ritratto di Roma Moderna.* Printed in 1645. Page 435.

*Roma Ricertaca.* Printed in 1699. Page 73.

*Guido Pancirolli in Roma Sacra e Moderna.* Printed in 1725. Page 37.

*Crescembini ne Commentarii de la Volgar Poesia.* Page 242.

tations of the Passion of our Saviour at the *Collisee*, could not have been introduced sooner than in the Year 1449; so that, according to this Authority, they must have lasted for near a hundred Years, because they ended under *Paul* the third, towards the Year 1549. This Opinion is founded on the Testimony of *Crescembeni*, in his *History of Poetry in his Mother-Tongue*, where he cites *Cionnacci*, and speaks in the following manner of *Pious Representations*. I shall translate his own Words: “ The most ancient that  
 “ have come to our Hands, says he, is, ac-  
 “ cording to *Cionnacci*, (who says that he  
 “ had the Manuscript) that of *Abraham* and  
 “ *Isaac*, by *Francis Beliori*, who died in  
 “ the Year 1484.” The same *Cionnacci* adds, that at the End of the Manuscript he read these Words; “ The above Piece was  
 “ played, for the first time, at *Florence*, in  
 “ the Church of *Saint Mary Magdalen*, in  
 “ the Year 1449;” and *Crescembeni* affirms, that this was the first from Holy Writ that ever was composed or acted in *Italy*. But if I am not mistaken he is in the wrong, because the Manuscript affirms no such thing; it only informs us, that the Play of *Abraham and Isaac* was represented, for the first time, in the Year 1449. But it does not say that this was the first Poem of the kind that ever had been composed in *Italy*. Had it  
 been



been so, the Author would not have failed to have challenged to himself the Honour of the Invention, and to have let us know that he was the first that brought the Sacred Tragedies upon the Stage; therefore Mr. *Crescembeni* attributed to him an Honour which the Author could not claim, and which if he had, all *Italy* might perhaps have given him the Lye.

Some Pages before, *Crescembeni*, in searching for the Original and Rise of Sacred Representations, rejects a Fact which I look upon as decisive in this Point, and therefore shall translate the Passage literally. “ We  
 “ cannot, says he, by any means fix upon  
 “ the Time when they began; tho’ *Vasori*,  
 “ in his Life of *Buffalmacco* the Painter,  
 “ gives us an Account of this Feast which  
 “ was made upon the *Arno* in the Year  
 “ 1304, where a Machine, representing  
 “ Hell, was fixed upon the Boats, and  
 “ which *Cionnacci* imagines may be that of  
 “ *Teofilo*, at the End of which, as he asserts,  
 “ Hell was represented, *since it is remarked-*  
 “ *that towards the End of it, the Devil is*  
 “ *returning to Hell with a Jew, and an Angel*  
 “ *dismisses the Spectators. Or rather that of*  
 “ *Lazarus the rich and Lazarus the poor,*  
 “ *at the End of which the rich Lazarus in*  
 “ *Hell in vain begs Relief of the poor one*  
 “ *who is in Abraham’s Bosom.* However,  
 from



“ from the Time and Place of Representa-  
 “ tion, (it happening about the Calends of  
 “ *May*, when every thing that was exhibited  
 “ was of the prophane kind,) we shall not  
 “ place this Entertainment among the Sa-  
 “ cred Feasts, nor affirm that this was the  
 “ first that ever was represented in *Italy*.”

I am far from thinking this Conclusion of our Author just. This Entertainment might have been represented on the River *Arno* as a prophane one, but still the Subject on which it is built is sacred or moral; so that if it was not of the one kind, it ought always to be understood to be included under the Rank and Denomination of the other. Therefore instead of refuting this Opinion, I shall make Use of the Discovery itself as a Direction for tracing, to more remote Antiquity, Works of this Nature, and endeavour to fix the Foundation of a probable Conjecture on this Subject.

If I might venture to give my Opinion on a Point so obscure, especially after the Authority which I have quoted above, I own I should be very much of the Mind that the Representation of the Passion of our Saviour at the *Coliseum* took its Rise much about the Time of the Establishment of the Fraternity *del Gonfalone*. This I think we may reasonably conclude from the *Statutes* of that *Company*, which were printed at *Rome*  
 by

by *Bonfadino*, in the Year 1584, Page 74, an Abstract from which I shall here translate.

“ The principal Design of our Fraternity  
“ being to represent the *Passion of* JESUS  
“ CHRIST, WE ORDAIN, that in case the  
“ Mysteries of the said Passion are repre-  
“ sented, our ancient Orders shall be observ-  
“ ed, together with what shall be prescribed  
“ by the *General Congregation*.”

Two Reflections naturally arise from this Passage. It appears from thence, that the principal and essential *Constitution of the Fraternity del Gonfalone*, was in order to represent the *Passion of our Lord*; it appears likewise that they had certain Regulations to direct them in the Management of these *Representations*, and in the *Execution of the Tragedy*. But is it credible that the Brethren, *del Gonfalone*, had deviated from the principal Regulations of their Order, especially if we consider that the Observation of these Statutes was not only agreeable to their Genius, but even pleased the general Taste of the whole Nation? Every Body is very well acquainted with the *Passion* the *Italians* have for Shows; besides the Public knows with what Earnestness all new Establishments are embraced. But this Fraternity was founded in the Year 1264, as appears by the Preface to the Statutes of the Company,  
and

and by *Ottavio Panciroli*, in his *Tesoro nascosti di Roma*, Page 488. According to these Authorities, the Representation of our Lord's Passion must have begun about the Year 1264, and continued for two hundred and eighty eight Years. This is upon a Supposition that the Authors I have already quoted are in the right, when they affirm that they were abolished towards the End of the Pontificate of *Paul the third*, that is to say, about the Year 1549. This is my first Conjecture.

The *Italians* boast that their Theatre is the Original and Model of all the others in *Europe*. I know they are in the right of it; but this Assertion is founded only on an ancient Tradition. And without their searching into the Original of the *French*, *Spanish*, and *English* Theatres, they having firmly and implicitly believed that at whatever Time the *Italian* Theatre was opened it must have been the first. Therefore they were at no Pains to fix the precise Æra, and did not care whether it was two Centuries sooner, or two Centuries later. They have one positive Instance of a Representation of a *Divine* or *Moral* Nature, exhibited upon the *Arno* in the Year 1304, but this they reject, in order to fix it one hundred and sixty Years later; by this means they destroy another Æra, which is that of the *Fraternity del Gonfalone*, established in the Year

1264, and fix the first Representation of a Holy Subject so late as the Year 1449. Were this Computation incontestably true, the *Italians* could have no Reason to boast of their being the Fathers of the Drama in *Europe*, but ought to be contented with admitting that they are but the Scholars of other Nations, since no Fact is more certain than that the Mysteries of the Old Testament were represented at *London* in the Year 1378, and in *France* in the Year 1398, or rather sooner, as we shall prove in a proper Place. It is therefore evident that the *Italians* must have learnt the Dramatic Art from the *English* and *French*, if we admit that their Plays did not begin at the Time when the Fraternity *del Gonfalone* was established, which was in 1264, or about the Time of the Entertainment presented on the *Arno* already mentioned, which was about the Year 1300; and if, as *Crescembeni* and the other modern *Roman* Antiquaries contend, their first moral Representation was so late as the Year 1449.

What we have quoted from the Statutes of the *Fraternity of the Gonfalone*, suggests another Reflection on this Head. They enact, "That in case the Mysteries of the Passion should be represented, they should conform to the *Ancient Orders*, and to what should be prescribed by the *General Congregation*."



“*gregation.*” Therefore the Representation of our Saviour’s Passion was prohibited only with regard to the Place where it was exhibited, and *Paul* the second only abolished it at the *Collisee*. It is even rational to presume that the Fraternity exhibited them since that Time; but in other Places, for thirty six Years after the Prohibition by this Pope, it appears by new Statutes that they had a Privilege of playing, *if they thought fit*. For if the Representation of our Lord’s Passion had been absolutely prohibited by the Pope in the City of *Rome*, the Insertion of this Clause was quite useless, nor would it have been lawful to have inserted it at all, had it been expressly contrary to the Orders of the Holy See.

All Holy Tragedies have been written in Verse; but we ought not to rely upon the printed Editions to determine whether the most ancient that we have were acted in the same Shape in which they are printed. These Editions inform us that they were transcribed, in order to render them more legible and more agreeable to the Modern Taste; and this was done as often as a new Edition was published, or the Play, after some Interval, was revived. Among others, there remains an Edition of one of these Tragedies, where the principal Point I have been endeavouring to prove, is clearly explained,

ed, and the Translation of the-Title Page is as follows. “ Of the Passion, Death, and “ Resurrection of Jesus Christ, being a Tragicall Representation, by *John Baptist Filaur*, the third Edition, corrected from a great many Mistakes, and enlarged with the Addition of a great Number of Lines by *Salvatore Massonio*, and played in the City of *Aquila* on Holy Thursday, in the Year 1614.” The Representations therefore of the Passion were not abolished in *Italy* sixty five Years after the Prohibition issued out by *Paul* the third. This too serves to confirm the Opinion I have advanced, that this Prohibition extended only to the Place of Representation, and not to the Thing represented.

Representations from *Holy Writ* continued in *Italy* to 1660, that is, three Years after the Pontificate of *Paul* the third; and that not only in private Places, but much oftner in Churches upon the Celebration of the Festivals of the Saint who gave Name to the Church; as we may gather from the Title-Pages of a great Number of Plays; but had they been prohibited and abolished by the Pope, the *Italian* Bishops never would have suffered them to have been represented within their *Bishopricks*, much less in their *Churches*: But the Medley of *Sacred* and *Prophane*, together with the Loose Comedy, interspersed

in these Performances, disgusted the Spectators, and in a little time they were quite laid aside.

From all I have said above, I believe we may fairly conclude, that if the Passion of our Lord was not presented at the *Collisee* for the first time, in the Year of the Establishment of the *Fraternity of the Gonfalone*, which was founded in 1264, it appeared there very soon after. Admitting this, I believe, it will naturally enough follow, that this Fraternity were not the first Inventors of these kind of Representations, but that they had before been privately exhibited upon the Stage, tho' in a very bungling manner, and that the Fraternity had it in View to act them with greater Magnificence, and in a more correct manner at the *Collisee*. What End would the Institution of this Fraternity have served, supposing this to be the principal Object they had in View, if they deferred putting it in Execution for a *hundred four-score and five Years*? It is therefore reasonable to believe that the Execution of this Project was not deferred very long; and it would be a Contradiction to all the Rules of Probability, should we affirm that they did not commence till the Year 1449.

Forty Years intervened betwixt the Establishment of the Fraternity, and the Entertainment exhibited upon the *Arno* at *Florence*,



rence, in the Year 1304. And I take it for an undisputed Fact, that during the intermediate time, the Passion of our Lord, with the other Holy Representations, as well as other prophane Comedies or Farces as they are sometimes termed, begun already to be in Vogue, and that they even had appear'd a long time before the Establishment of the Fraternity; tho' perhaps they were the first who erected a kind of a Theatre in a public Place, such as the *Collifée*, where they were to be represented.

*Dante* was the first who introduced Poetry among the *Italians*; and without relying upon what *Leonardo Aretino* makes *Dante* himself say, in his Life\*, 'that Poetry had commenced a hundred and fifty Years before his Time,' it is sufficient for my Purpose, that it began to prevail in the Days of *Guido Guinicelli*, *Guittone*, *Bonaguinta*, and *Guida da Messina*, who lived before *Dante*, as they flourished in the Year 1200; this confirms my Conjecture, that the Drama was introduced into *Italy* towards the Year 1200, which is before the Establishment of the Fraternity *del Gonfalone*, who probably formed the Plan of their Institution upon the Custom which prevailed in the Country of representing the Passion, on some other Entertainment, the Subject of which was either Moral or Divine.



The *Italian* Writers never advance any thing as Fact for which they have not *Ocular Demonstration*; and when they once ground an Opinion upon Facts, if they happen to differ amongst themselves, they are perpetually at odds; the Contradiction goes round, and the Difference for ever remains irreconcilable: Considering the Uncertainty in which they have left us, I am very sensible that if any Body shall adopt the Conjectures, which appear to me to be well founded, I shall be the means of bringing him into a great deal of Trouble and Dispute, but far contrary to my Intention. The Invention of Printing happened at a Time when *Italy*, of all the Nations in *Europe*, possessed the greatest Share of Learning, and by this means the Works of their Ancestors suffered not a little; for their Men of Learning did not apply themselves to the Publication of any Work (especially of the poetical kind) that was not in a polished Stile, and a correct Turn. Thus it is by great Chance, that any thing which was otherwise has at all came to our Hands. In this Conduct they were not imitated by the other Nations in *Europe*, as we shall shew in a proper Place; these last having printed every thing composed by their Ancestors be it good, bad, or indifferent, if written two or three hundred Years before, and by this they have a considerable Advantage over the  
*Italians,*

*Italians*, in transmitting to Posterity many Works which serve as the Documents and the Guides of History. Had the *Italians* done the same thing, we should not have at this Time been at a Loss how to fix the Date of the *Italian Drama*.

Since the Year 1500 no *Italian* Poet has professed to write for the Theatre, in order to pick up Money; Dramatic Poetry having since that Time been an *Art*, but not a *Trade*. The Dukes of *Ferrara*, *Florence*, *Urbino*, and *Mantua*, suffered Plays to be acted only within their own Palaces. The Academy of *Sienna* was the first that, by its own Example, encouraged other Learned Bodies to compose and represent correct Comedies. Their Example was followed during the xviii<sup>th</sup> Century; and the hired Actors, who till that Time had always acted extempore, never acted any Piece that had not before been printed.

As to what regards the modern *Italian* Theatre, I shall begin by giving the Reader some Notion of the Structure of the Stage itself, and the Character of the Spectators. The Spectators in almost all the Cities of *Italy* are *restless* and *noisy*, even before the Play begins. In their Applauses they are violent; and when they would distinguish a favourite Poet or Actor, they cry as loud as they can *Viva—Viva*. But if they have a

Mind to damn the one, or hiss the other, they bawl out *Va dentro*, and very often they make the poor Actor feel a further Proof of their Indignation by pelting him with Apples, and loading him with a great deal of Abuse. But the Actors who have Reputation and Merit meet with great Esteem and Applause; and in the very Cities where the Audiences are most unruly, they immediately become calm when a favourite Play or Actor appears on the Stage.

But there are some Cities where the Audience is always quiet and civil, even tho' neither the Play nor the Players are agreeable; the Spectators shewing no other Resentment than by not returning to the same Entertainment, after having sat it out two or three times; and instead of Noise and Bawling, they express their Displeasure by a Contempt that is a tacite but an equally strong Proof of Dislike. This Conduct prevails in the Cities of *Genoa*, *Lucca*, and *Florence*; however the Audiences there know how to discern and do Justice to a Poet or Actor of Merit.

In *Italy* they are entirely Strangers to the Custom of exhibiting Theatrical Entertainments thro' the whole Year, the Towns where they are at all established having their stated Times for Playing, which do not happen always at one Time of the Year: The Comedians, during the Space of twelve Months,



Months, visit a good Part of *Italy*. The Theatres of *Venice* are open from the Month of *October* to the first Day of *Lent*. In many Cities of the two *Lombardies*, the Spring of the Year is allotted for Comedies; and they are represented in the Day-time without any Lights, because the Play-houses are built in such a manner as to be sufficiently enlightened by the Sun. These Play-houses, or rather Halls, are sometimes a plain Booth erected in large *Areas*, almost like that of *Veroná*, where every Year such Booths are built in the *Arena* of the great Amphitheatre.

In the Cities where Comedies are acted by the Day-light, the Representation goes on with great Regularity, which arises not so much from the Characters of the Spectators, as from the Difficulty they would find to escape public Censure.

The Theatres are open in *Rome* only the last eight Days of the *Carnaval*. And ever since *Innocent the Eleventh* prohibited Women from acting on the Stage, young Men supply their Places in Habits of Women.

The *Italian* Theatres are magnificent, they commonly having four Rows of Boxes, besides a lower one, which forms as it were a Partition round the Pit. There is at *Venice* a Theatre with seven Rows of Boxes; this is distinguished by the Title of *Saint Samuel*,



according to the general Custom of designing their different Theatres by the Name of their respective Parishes where they are built. It is an established Custom all over *Italy* to sit in the Pit.

In *Venice* one may see a Comedy for sixteen Sols of *Current* Money, which is paid at the Door, where they receive a Ticket. But then, if one designs to sit, he must pay ten Sols more ; but if the Pit is not full, they are suffered to stand on the Floor, towards the Bottom of the House. As to the Boxes, every Body who is admitted there must pay for a whole one to himself.

The Theatres at *Venice* commonly contain *four and twenty*, and sometimes *thirty* Boxes in a Row ; but these Boxes can hold no more than six Persons, so that admitting they were all full, they would contain no more than fourteen hundred Persons in all \*. The great Theatre in *Milan* is one of the largest in *Italy* ; but none of them are comparable to that of *Parma*, which, like those of *Ancient Rome*, has no Boxes, but Benches arising in form of an Amphitheatre.

At *Venice* the Spectators go masqued to the public Diversions, which is a great Convenience to the Nobles, especially the Senators and

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\* The Author must mean *the whole House being full*.

and the other Persons who are in great Offices; because while they are masqued they have no Occasion to distinguish themselves by the Habit that is peculiar to their Quality or Employment, and even the *Doge* himself in this Disguise, may go without his Attendants. But if they have a Mind, they may go with their bare Faces, which gives an Opportunity for the Women of Quality and Distinction to be seen.

There are commonly in that City eight Theatres open; four for Comedies, and four for Operas. As the Distinctions of Ranks must be observed here, the Women of Quality place themselves always in the Front-Boxes; and the *Courtezans*, who for some time past have used to masque themselves, sit in the Row immediately below. The Men and the Women, who are to sit in Chairs in the Pit, take great Care not to put on fine Cloaths, it being the Custom to spit out of the Boxes into the Pit, and to throw into it the Remains of what they have been eating, which renders it extremely disagreeable.

The Boxes are hired either for a Year or a Day. But what they call their Year begins, as we have observed before, in the Month of *October*, and ends on the last Day of the *Carnaval*. The Price of these Boxes are not fixed, it being regulated according to the Pieces that are represented; the Licencer of  
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the Stage is the Judge how much they shall be enlarged or how much diminished; and that again is commonly regulated by the Merits of the Piece and of the Actors; the Success of a new Piece having sometimes mounted an Upper Gallery to the Price of a Sequin, or ten *French* Livres; a Front Box to ten Sequins, and the others in Proportion. There are very few Cities in *Italy* which have not more than one Theatre; they having generally two or three, and the Prices paid at the Door are commonly regulated according to the Rules that obtain at *Venice*.

Having thus spoken of the Structure of the Stage itself, I proceed now to the Pieces represented on it. Since the Year 1500, the *Italians* may boast with Justice that their Drama has been very complete. Perhaps it is the only Theatre in *Europe* which can date its Excellency so far back; and with regard to the Rules of Writing, as well as the Genius and Taste of the Writers, it has proved the Model of all the Theatres that have been since erected.

Towards the Middle of the xviii<sup>th</sup> Century, *Spanish* Plays took Place instead of their most perfect Dramatical Performances; and so prevailing was this universal Degeneracy of Taste, during the last fifty Years, that the best Pieces of their Ancestors, which came into their Hands, were but very little esteemed.

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in the Country. A Poetical Production, in the Manner of *Petrarch*, met with but very few Admirers, and was generally looked upon as low and insipid. The Productions for the Stage met with the same Fate; for during all that Period, if a good Play appeared, it was received with Contempt, and a Man would have blushed to say that he had read it. In short, the Taste for the *Spanish* Drama, which must be owned to have its Beauties, was carried in *Italy* to the highest Pitch of Extravagance. The Productions in this way are very numerous in *Italy*, and mostly in the last I have mentioned.

But the Madness began to abate, and towards the End of the Century, Men of Learning, Wit, and Taste, appeared almost thro' all the Cities of *Italy*, who by their Writings and Academical Dissertations, in Seminaries or Societies of Learning, revived and established good Sense in every Province of Poetry. With regard to the *Drama*, Translations from *Racine* and *Corneille* were opposed to the prevailing Extravagance of Taste, and the mercenary Players, in imitation of these private Judges, struck into the Road of good Sense; thus after a hard Struggle betwixt Truth and Error, *Taste* again prevailed in *Italy*.

Since the Year 1700 a great Number of good Tragedies have been composed by the  
Wits



Wits of *Italy*; some upon the *French*, some upon the ancient Plan of Writing; the latter are the Productions of the finest Pens of *Italy*, who dissatisfied with the *French* Manner have, but not with all the Success that one could wish, endeavoured to revive that of the *Greeks*; we have likewise seen Comedies in both Manners appear, and all in Verse: It is true, they are so very few that the *Italian* Stage, since the Year 1700, is extremely low, if we compare it to those of *England*, *France*, and *Spain*, which every Year increased their Stock by the Accession of new Plays.

The Barrenness of the *Italian* Stage is doubtless owing to the Authors that write for it reaping no Profit from their Labours. A Man of Wit and Fortune, sometimes for his own Amusement and Satisfaction, composes a Theatrical Performance and gives it to the Players. Others, such as *Martelli* and *Gravino*, ordered their Productions of that kind to be printed before they appear upon the Stage, leaving the Players at Liberty, after they are printed, to represent them in what Manner and at what Time they please; but these Hits so seldom happen, that we have all the Reason in the World to fear, a true Taste for the Drama will be soon entirely extinguished in *Italy*.

Men of Wit and Spirit, who don't always share equally in the Gifts of Fortune as of  
Nature,

Nature, follow another Road for attaining their Ends. Time has insensibly destroyed most Part of the Academies; and in those that remain, the same Taste does not prevail. If from time to time, and merely as the Fancy struck them, they take it into their Heads to compose some Pieces for the Theatre, they chuse rather to translate them from the *French* than to compose Originals. This is the Practice in the Colleges of *Rome*, *Parma*, and almost all the other Colleges of *Italy*. The Ease with which the *French* Plays are translated debauches those into that Practice, who have Genius enough to compose Originals; and *Gigli*, one of the best Poets of his Age, after having composed a great many original Pieces, translated the *Tartuff* of *Moliere* under the Title of *D' Pilone*. Hence I foresee that the *Italian* Poets will degenerate into mere Translators, and my Prediction is already but too much fulfilled.

Tho' in *Italy* the *Dramatic* Poets have never wrote for Money, yet we find by the *Dramaturgia* of *Alacci*, that their Number was very considerable. According to that *Catalogue*, it amounts to no less than one hundred and thirty nine *Tragic* Poets, and three hundred and eleven *Comic* Poets of a correct Age, *i. e.* since the Year 1500.

The same Author, whose Account reaches

no farther than *A. D.* 1660, gives us the Titles of the Pieces, together with the Names of the *Author* who have wrote *Tragi-Comedies*, *Pastorals*, and *Sacred Tragedies*; and adding these to the Poets in my *Catalogue*, we will find that the Number of *Italian Dramatic Poets*, in the Space of one hundred and sixty Years at most, amounts to one Thousand two Hundred and Twelve. But this Catalogue leaves a Gap unaccounted for of no less than seventy six Years back from this Date; and if, amongst that infinite Number of Performances, there were some of them taken from the *Spanish*, or written in the Manner of that Nation, yet a sufficient Number of good ones will be found to persuade me that if the *Italian Theatre* had been as productive of Rewards to the Poets, as the other Theatres of *Europe*, it must have produced both better Performances, and in greater Number than any other; for when Glory and Profit meet together, they form the ruling Principle of a Genius.

As we have treated of the *Dramatic Poets* from the Year 1500 to 1660, it will be of some Use to make the World acquainted with the Number of Pieces that were printed in that Time. In the Collection of the *Vatican Library* we meet with no less than two hundred and thirty five prophane *Tragedies*, five hundred *Comedies*, two hundred and thirty



thirty seven *Pastorals*, one hundred and twenty *Tragi-Comedies*, and four hundred and five *Sacred* or *Moral Tragedies*. *Alacci* in his sixth List gives a Catalogue of Tragedies, Comedies, Pastorals, and other Dramas which have not yet been published, but which were written before the Year 1660; and not contented with adding to these an Historical Account of them, he points out the very Libraries and private Repositories where they are preserved in Manuscript: But since the Days of *Alacci*, not above twelve of these Pieces have been printed; in this List we find one hundred and ten *Prophane Tragedies*, seventy *Sacred* or *Moral* ones, two hundred and three *Comedies*, twenty *Pastorals*, and a great Number of *Operas*. And in a kind of *Supplement* which he has added, he reckons up twelve *Tragedies* more, eighteen *Sacred Representations*, fifteen *Comedies*, ten *Tragi-Comedies*, two *Pastorals*, and a great Quantity of *Operas*, which ought to have been added to his Catalogue. Upon summing up these different Numbers, we shall find that the *Italian Stage* has produced above two thousand Plays; and if the Catalogue of seventy six Years, which intervenes betwixt this present Time and the Year 1660, shall ever appear, I make no Question but that *Italy*, in the Space of two hundred Years, has enriched  
their



their Theatre with upwards of five thousand Plays. We may advance this Fact with the greater Assurances, as the *Dramaturgia* of *Alacci* contains only a Collection of those Pieces that remain in the *Vatican Library*, and not those that were printed betwixt the Years 1500 and 1660, and which are still more numerous than these he has mentioned. I have a great Number of Tragedies and Comedies of which *Alacci* takes no Notice, and I daily find others that neither of us knew any thing of before. This makes me believe that we never shall have a complete Collection, or even a genuine Catalogue of all the Pieces belonging to the *Italian Theatre*.

*Italy*, which at that Time contained almost as many *Sovereigns* as it contains *Cities*, each of which had their particular Theatres, could not make a Collection of their Plays with the same Ease as the *French*, *Spaniards*, or *English*. As these last were all under one Sovereign, the Theatres were the same in their several Capitals, and there was no great Difficulty of finding, in the same Cities, all that was necessary for Information on this Head in their most ancient Registers, or in their Libraries. But in *Italy*, a Man, whether prompted by his own Curiosity, or obliged to obey the Commands of his Prince to make such a Collection, must have visited all these Cities in order to collect the *Memoirs*  
and

and *Anecdotes* peculiar to the several Entertainments exhibited in every City or Palace, and then indeed he might have left us a general Catalogue of all the Pieces belonging to the different Theatres; therefore it is to Chance alone that we owe a great Number of Pieces preserved in the Libraries and Cabinets of the Curious.

But if true *Comedy* shall be lost among the *Italians*, they will always retain a kind of *Comedy*, tho' not deserving that Appellation, and more properly to be called *Farce*; I mean that ancient mercenary *Comedy* which was played *extempore*, and succeeded to the *Latin Comedy*, which at first indeed was low and immodest, but afterwards was improved into greater Decency and Correctness. Should the Ruin of Learning become general in *Italy*, and should her *Species* of *Dramatic Poets* ever be extinct, the Ignorance of the People would give them a Relish for this kind of *Comedy* or *Farce*. It is therefore to be presumed, that it will continue but too long should it be once introduced, but its Reputation can never be solid, because it must always depend upon the Abilities of the Actors.

These Farces, the Original of which is to me unknown, and which have run thro' all the Courts of *Europe*, have led many *French Writers* into a Mistake, when they have been

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speaking of their own Theatre, and have been obliged to run a Parallel betwixt it and those of other Nations. The Abbe *Aubignac*, the Author of the *French* Theatre, printed in 1674, whose Name I am unacquainted with, *Moreri*, and every Author who has handled this Subject, in speaking of the *Italian* Theatre, have mentioned only the *extempore Farces* performed by Actors in Masque, because, in reality, this was the only Species of the *Drama* known in *France* so late as the Reign of *Henry* the Third, which was about the Year 1578.

The *Italian* Players don't always use to play their Parts *extempore*; they have, as I shall shew by and by, sometimes learned it by heart, according to the different Ages in which they lived. But in those Courts in *Europe* who are not so well acquainted with the *Italian* Language, and where the *Italian* Players are sought after and encouraged, they have gone entirely into the *extempore* Manner, and it is under this Character that they are known over all *Germany*, and particularly in *France*. Hence arose the Mistakes into which the *French* Authors I have named were led, in supposing that the *Italian* Drama consisted formerly entirely in those Sorts of Buffoonries; and upon this Supposition, without examining further, they have pronounced the *French* Theatre to be superior  
both



both in Tragedy and Comedy, to all the other Theatres in *Europe*. In this Opinion they are not perhaps far in the wrong; but it would not at all derogate from the Merit of the *French* Theatre, should their Authors examine the State of the *Italian* for an Age or two before, and upon a just Comparison of the Merits of both, found the Superiority which they attribute to their own Countrymen. I am pretty much convinced that the Glory of *Corneille*, *Racine*, and *Moliere*, would receive an additional Lustre by comparing them with Rivals, and not as they do, found their Triumphs upon a Conquest, where the Forces of the Parties are by no means equal, or rather where they can have no Opportunity of a Struggle. It was in order to dissipate this Mistake which so generally prevails in *France*, that I have given to the Public the long Catalogue of Tragedies and Comedies in my *History of the Italian Theatre*.

The *French* Authors have run into another Mistake with regard to *Italian* Players, in maintaining that as they only excel in the Mimic Way, they are incapable of doing Justice to any thing that is great and pathetic. But this Notion is effectually destroyed, not only by the *Italian* Company established at *Paris* in the Year 1716, but by other Players of that Nation, who at different



Times have studied their Parts both in true Tragedy and Comedy. The Action of the Company I have mentioned, in the Tragedies of *Merope* and *Andromache* in *Italian Verse*, and in the Tragi-Comedies of *Hercules*, *Sampson*, and *Life is a Dream*, and many other Pieces, have sufficiently convinced the Public that *Italian* Players are as capable as those, of any other People, to touch the Great and Pathetic.

Besides we find in *Italy* an Excellence not easily to be met with amongst other Nations. No *Italian* Company ever contains more than eleven Actors or Actresses; of whom five, including the Scaramouch, speak only the *Bolognese*, *Venetian*, *Lombard*, and *Neapolitan* Dialects. Yet when they are to act a Tragedy which requires a large Number of Players, every one of them is employed; even *Harlequin* lays aside his Masque, and they all declaim in Verse as properly as if they were Natives of *Rome*. This Practice renders them capable of doing Justice to the most sublime Sentiments of Dramatic Writing, and at the same time of agreeably imitating the most ridiculous Oddities in Nature. This is a Merit which we may say is peculiar to the *Italians*, since amongst the Companies of other Nations, which generally consist of at least thirty Actors, every one is determined by his natural or acquired Qualifications in the

the Choice of the Part he undertakes; and it is very rare that we meet with one or two who can sustain different Characters, and suit themselves to every accidental Variation of Characters and Persons.



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of



## *Of the* ITALIAN OPERA.

FROM the first Rise of the *Italian* Theatre, Music has always been intermixed with Action. The Method of introducing it into the Drama has varied according to the several Junctures. At first it began by the Chorus's always being sung, then the Prologues, Interludes in Verse, and Epilogue. When the Theatre, by the fine Productions of a more polished Age, began to improve, the Practice of intermixing Music with the Representation of true Tragedies or Comedies wore out in twenty or thirty Years, and both were represented in the Taste and Simplicity of the Ancients; Tragedy having a Chorus that declaimed, and Comedy a Prologue that was repeated. By this sudden Change, we may easily conceive that the Use of Music was quite laid aside, because inconsistent with these regular Representations, and despicable, as its being one of the Parts of Farce which had been just abolished.

Some time after, the Poets abandoned that Severity for which they had been so remarkable at the Beginning of their Reformation; nor does any *Italian* Writer inform us of the Reasons. I am inclined to believe that the

Audiences

Audiences were disgusted with the dry Exactness of Rules, and that their Poets accommodated themselves to the Taste of the People, which demanded perhaps something more entertaining. After that, Tragedies were represented without a Chorus, Music was again admitted into the Prologue of Comedies, and by degrees they introduced Interludes which had no relation to the main Subject; sometimes those Interludes were unconnected the one with the other, and each made an Action apart; \* but very often three or four Interludes formed a continued Action, which was a great Embellishment to the principal Piece.

It will not be improper to observe, that the three Examples referred to in the Note are of the noble and exalted kind, and that they are adapted to the Nature and Genius of the several Pieces to which they were subservient, which are either Pastorals or Tragi-Comedies; as there are likewise Interludes of another kind, adapted to the Manner and Spirit of Comedy.

We must likewise observe, that at this Time the Theatre begun insensibly to decline, and that instead of exact Tragedy and regular Comedy, Pastorals, Tragi-Comedies, and Interludes were introduced, which daily

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\* *L'Aurora Ingannata; Glauco Schernito; Dafnè conversa in Laura.*



degenerating, at last produced the monstrous Births we have mention'd.

These musical Interludes, interrupted by performing the several Acts in the principal Pieces, afforded a formal and pompous Show; and if they had been separated from the Pastoral, or Tragi-Comedy, to which they were annexed, they wanted nothing but a *Name* to denounce them a Species of Representations quite different from Tragedy or Comedy.

The *Italian* Writers have been at a great deal of Pains to settle the precise Time in which the Opera begun. Some maintain that the *Euridice* \* of *Rinuccini*, acted at *Florence* in the Year 1600, upon Occasion of the Marriage of *Mary de Medicis* to *Henry* the Fourth, was the first of this kind. Others ascribe the Merits of its Invention to *Emilio del Cavalieri*, who, in the Year 1590, exhibited *Il Satyro* and *La Disperazione de Fileno*, both musical Pastorals, at *Florence* in the Great Duke's Palace.

Without troubling myself to criticise upon their several Discussions of this Point, I shall take my Date from that musical Tragedy, which the Senate and Republic caused to be acted in the Palace of the *Doge* before *Henry* III, when he passed thro' *Venice*, in his Return from *Poland* in 1574 †. All the *Italian*  
Princes

\* *Rinuccini*: *Rime*, p. 13.

† *La gloria della poesia è della musica*. Printed at *Venice* without a Date.

Princes about this Time publickly exhibited Operas in their own Palaces. It is however universally agreed that the first Opera appeared at *Venice* in the Year 1634. †

The Book I have quoted informs us, that during the Carnival, in the Year 1637, the first public Opera, called *Andromachus*, was exhibited on the Theatre of St. *Cassan*. Next Year at the same Time, and upon the same Theatre, a second was exhibited, called the *Magician Thunder-struck*. These two first Operas were exhibited with great Magnificence, and at the Expence both of the Poet and Musicians. In the Year 1639, the Theatre of St. *John* and St. *Paul*, on which nothing but Comedy had been acted, was rebuilt; and the first Piece exhibited upon it was *La Delie de Jule Strozzi*, where also they exhibited the *Armida*, as an Entertainment during the Carnival. The Theatre of St. *Cassan* acted at the same the Opera of *The-tis* and *Deleus*; and in the Autumn the other Theatre exhibited that of *Adonis*, which had so great a Run, that it was acted, without Interruption, from the Month of *October* till Lent.

In that same Carnival, which began the Year 1640, the old Theatre called St. *Moses's*, the Foundation of which is unknown, exhibited the *L' Arriane d' Octavio Rinuccini*, which many Years before had been acted in  
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the Palaces of some *Italian* Princes, and which, according to the Edition in 1608, is prior, by thirty two Years, to the Representation I have just now mentioned.

I shall not here pretend to enumerate all the different kinds of Operas which for these hundred Years have appeared upon the *Venetian* Stage; they would disgust the Reader, and swell this Volume to an useless Bulk: I shall content myself to refer the Curious to a Book I have already quoted, which is a little Volume in Twelves, printed at *Venice*, entitled *The Glory of Poetry and Music*. This Book is a Catalogue containing two hundred and sixty eight Pages; the Bookseller has added, by way of Appendix, a List of the Operas that have been presented for that Year. This Book is printed without any Date, and began to appear in the Year 1730. One may easily judge how much Operas are in Fashion at *Venice*, when he is told that at certain Seasons they play every Day, and in six Theatres at the same time.

No Sovereign ever spent so much upon these Representations as the *Venetians* have done, except perhaps *Ranuce Farnese*, Duke of *Parma*, who amazed all *Italy* by the Entertainments which he presented in the Year 1690, on Occasion of the Marriage of his Son Prince *Edward*. The World yet talks of two Operas which he presented, the one  
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in the Night-time upon the great Stage of his Palace, and the other in the Day-time upon the great Bason which he caused to be built in his Gardens. It were to be wished that we could give an exact Detail of all the Machines which the skilful Architects contrived on that Occasion; and of all the wonderful Representations of that kind that have been executed at *Venice, Rome, Naples, Florence,* and the other Cities of *Italy*. As to the Decorations and the Machinery it may be safely affirmed, that no Theatre in *Europe* comes up to the Magnificence of the *Venetian* Opera; some of them will be handed down to our most distant Posterity; for Instance, the Opera entitled *The Division of the World*, which the Marquis *Guido Rangoni* exhibited in the Year 1675 at his own Expences, upon the Theatre of our *Holy Saviour*. In the Shepherd of *Amphise*, which was presented twenty Years after upon the Theatre of *St. John Chrysostome*, the Palace of *Apollo* was seen to descend of very fine and grand Architecture, and built of Christsals of different Colours which were always playing; the Lights which were placed behind these Christsals were disposed in such a Manner, that so great a Flux of Rays played from the Machine, that the Eyes of the Spectators could scarcely support its Brightness.



The two *Bebienas*, these eminent Architects and celebrated Painters now alive, have convinced all *Europe*, by their grand Decorations, that a Theatre may be adorned without Machinery, not only with as much Magnificence, but with more Propriety. Machines produce a magical, or, if you will, a marvellous Effect; and we are often obliged to call to Mind the Contrivance of the Theatre, and that every thing that we see is moved by Pulleys, Ropes, Springs, and Weights, in order to prevent our Senses from being imposed upon, so as to believe what we see is represented to be real. I shall give one Instance of such an Illusion.

*Cato of Utica* is the Subject of an Opera presented upon the Theatre of St. *John Chrysostome* in the Year 1701. As *Cæsar* with his Army is supposed not to be far from that Scene where the Action is laid, and that the Inhabitants of the Province had prepared an Entertainment for him upon the Banks of the River, the Ground of the Stage represents a Field, towards the Middle of which there was hung in the Air a Globe, resembling that of the World; this Globe was observed by degrees to advance towards the Front of the Stage, to the Sound of Trumpets and other Instruments, and all this without the Spectators being able to discern the Pulleys and Machines that directed the whole. In the  
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Moment when it comes opposite to *Cæsar*, it opens into three Parts, representing the then three known Parts of the World. The Inside of the Globe shines all with Gold, Precious Stones, Metals of all Colours, and contains a great Number of Musicians. Thus we see what the Contrivance of a Theatre is capable of effecting, which is artfully to conceal the Pulleys and Springs; for by means of the first Scaffold being built above the Stage, it is easy to sustain and conduct in the Air a Machine of what Weight you please; and in such a Situation a Spectator stands in need of his Reflection, to put him in Mind that all is purely the Effect of the Machinery and Disposition; but in the mean time this is what the Poet and the Musician ought to endeavour to make him forget.

Players by their Art sometimes imitate Nature so perfectly, that they persuade the Spectator that all they see is real; but it is a much harder Task for the Musician to attain to this, it being much more difficult for them to accommodate their Notes to the Passions of Anger, Grief, Sorrow, and even to Death itself. The Poet and the Engineer, far from encreasing these Difficulties by unnatural Decorations, ought to represent to the Spectators the most elevated Ideas only with that Art which is most proper to render them more susceptible of the Impression that is to  
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be conveyed. The principal End of the Stage is Illusion, and that End can be obtained only by keeping to what is probable.

As to the *Italian* Musics, all *Europe* agree that towards the Middle of the last Century it arrived at *Perfection*, and continued in that State to the Beginning of this. The Compositions of *Scarlati* the elder, *Bononcini*, and many other excellent Masters, are undisputable Proofs of this. But these twenty Years past, the great Reputation it had acquired among Foreigners is a good deal diminished, because the *Italian* Taste of Music is now changed. In short, at present it is all a Whim; *Strength* is sought instead of *beautiful Simplicity*; and *Harshness* and *Singularity* is substituted instead of the *Expression* and *Truth* which distinguished the former Manner. The surprizing Capacity of their Singers, it is true, begets *Admiration*, but moves no *Passion*; and Judges say justly, that it is unreasonable to force a Voice to execute what is too much even for a *Violin* or a *Hautboy*. This is the true Reason why the *Italian* Music falls so far short of *Perfection* in *Expression* and *Truth*, and why it is threatened with total Ruin if it shall continue to deviate from that Manner which formerly brought it to *Perfection*. The new Manner however has got such Footing in *Italy*, that even Masters in the Art are obliged  
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in conformity to the general Taste, contrary to their better Judgment, to deviate from the Simplicity and Greatness of the ancient Manner, both in vocal and instrumental Performances.

As to their Musicians, the *Italians*, by their Method of *manufacturing* a Voice, have always a great Number of excellent Singers both with regard to the Fineness of the Pipe, and their Skill and Taste in Singing; such as *Pistocco, Pasqualino, Siface, Mattecucio, Cortona, Luigino*, and many others, whose Memory the Musicians of our Days will scarcely be able to efface. The Female-Performers have at all times disputed with the Males the Excellence of Singing. We may instance, among these who have excelled for half the last Century, *Francisca Vaini, Santa Stella, Tilla, Margaretta, Salicoli, Reggiana*, with many others. But she who in our Days retained the true Manner of *Italian* Excellence in Music, was the celebrated *Cuzzoni*; every Body knows that in the Year 1724 she sung with universal Applause a Motet and a Psalm composed by *Bononcini*, in the Chapel of *Fontainbleau*. She supported at *London*, for six Years, the Glory of the *Italian* Nation, and was recalled thither in the Year 1734, notwithstanding the Bickerings and Divisions betwixt the *Italian* Theatres. Her Salary was about fifteen hundred Guineas a Year,



as was that of *Francis Bernardi*, known by the Name of *Senesino*, an excellent Musician, who never suffered himself to be carried away by the Taste for the new Music. But what is very extraordinary in *Italy*, and over all the World, he joined to the Charms of his Voice, the Merit of *Action*, and the Player was as accomplished as the Musician.

I ought not here to forget the famous *Faustina Bardoni Affe*, whose Talents and Profits were equal to those of *Cuzzoni*, whom I have mentioned. It was owing to her extraordinary Capacity and her surprising Command of Voice, that *Faustina* was obliged to invent a new manner of Singing. As she has been extremely well received all over *Europe*, many Attempts have been made to imitate her; but her Imitators having neither her Pipe nor her Art, have only spoil'd their own Manner; and it is owing to this wretched Imitation that a bad Manner both of Singing and Composition prevails now so much in *Italy*, from whence it has been communicated to all *Europe*.

I have chosen to speak of *M. Carlo-Broschi*, surnamed *Farionelli*, last of all, both as he is the latest and youngest of the celebrated *Italian* Musicians. He sings in the Manner of *Faustina*; but it is owned by the best Judges that he infinitely outdoes her, having brought his Art to the last Degree of Perfection

fection. In the Year 1734 he was invited to *London*, where he sung three Winters with universal Applause. He arrived at *Paris* in 1736; and after he had sung in the most eminent Families, where he was received and treated with great Distinction, the King did him the Honour to hear him perform in the Queen's Chamber, and applauded him in a Manner that astonished the whole Court. The Admiration he created was so universal, that it is on all Hands agreed *Italy* never did, and perhaps never will, produce so complete a Singer. He is now in *Spain*, and kept by the King and Queen to sing in their Chamber. That Prince by his Liberality, and the large Appointments he allows him, has completed the Good-Fortune of *M. Farinelli*, who by his great Talents and personal Merits deserves all he enjoys.

Formerly, the most able and celebrated Musicians at *Venice* received only one hundred *Roman* Crowns for performing for the whole Autumn and Carnival; and if thier Appointments reached to one hundred and twenty Crowns, or six hundred \* *French* Livres, it was considered as a Mark of great Distinction and a Proof of superior Merit. But for these thirty Years past, a fine Singer,

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\* About 28l. Sterling.

either Man or Woman, has always had upwards of one hundred Golden Sequins, which is about 550 *l.* Sterling. *Sancta Stella*, *Faustina*, *Cusconi* and *Farinelli*, were all paid on this Footing; but these prodigious Expences have ruined all the Undertakers of the Opera at *Venice*, and drained the heaviest Purfes in *Italy*. On this Account, and in order to raise the vast Sums that are paid to their Performers, they have for some Time past retrenched their expensive Machinery.

Three Livres of *Venetian* Money gains Admittance into the Hall of the Opera, thirty Sols a Seat in the Pit, and the Boxes are in Proportion. If we compare these poor Receivings with the Expences that are necessary for supporting the Magnificence of these Shows, we may easily account for the Losses which the Undertakers of the Opera sustain; it being impossible, that for the four Months, during which these Entertainments last, the Receiving should equal the Outgiving; for the *Venetian* Opera begins at soonest in the Middle of *November*, and continues only to the last Day of the Carnival.

As it is experienced all over *Europe*, and especially in *Italy*, that the best Performers, and the finest Voices cannot of themselves procure Success to an Opera, unless its Music and Drama is good; and that on the contrary,

trary, a good Drama and good Music, and very often the last alone, may succeed very well, tho' the Performance is but indifferent; therefore at *Venice*, where this is more sensibly felt than elsewhere, they follow a Method quite different from the ancient.

Since the Opera began there, six hundred and fifty Operas have appeared in less than one Century, tho' they were represented only in the Winter. Since the Year 1637, which is the Date of the first Appearance of the Opera at *Venice*, to the Year 1700, we compute only three hundred and fifty seven, exclusive of five or six, which were re-acted on account of their great Success. It appeared surprizing, that in the Space of sixty three Years in *Venice* alone, three hundred and fifty Operas should appear, but that Mystery is now solved. The Undertakers, not willing to run the Risk of Novelty, almost every Year re-act the Operas which succeeded in the preceding, nay, they sometimes act the same Opera two Nights successively; a Practice which disgusts the Spectators, and not a little blemishes the Glory of the *Italian* Theatre, so fertile in Novelty.

Some of the *Italian* Poets who have wrote in this way, have distinguished themselves by a noble and chaste Versification, and others by a poetical and elevated Imagination; but



the greatest Part of them do not deserve mention. Formerly, the Opera comprehended all Subjects, but, since the Machinery has been laid aside, it deals no longer in Fables, Divinities, Music, Pastoral, and the like, but confines itself entirely to History.

The old Operas that have come to our Hands, are Proofs of the *Italian* Genius in treating Historical Subjects. But at present, a Barrenness of Imagination seems to have succeeded this Fertility; the *French* Tragedies being commonly pilaged, to furnish out their Plans, their Scenes, and even their Thoughts.

All the Inconveniences we have mentioned may soon reduce the Opera into the same Situation with the Comedy: And we may talk some time hence of the *Italian* Opera, in the same manner as we now do of their Comedy of a *correct* Age, by esteeming the Antients, and despising the Moderns.





T H E

# SPANISH THEATRE.



BELIEVE one might venture to affirm, that the *Spaniards* were the first of any People in *Europe* who wrote for the Stage, could it not be proved that ever since the Decay of the *Romans* the Theatre has been open in *Italy* without Interruption. It must indeed be owned that Impostors and Mountebanks contributed not a little to its Continuation ; for they were the chief Supports of low Comedy, if one may bestow that Name upon their Buffoonries, which were Productions of a very monstrous Kind, in which the Laws of Dialogue were overlook'd, and the Propriety of Language disregarded. Tho' these Mountebanks afterwards added a Lusture and Dignity to their

Entertainments, by exhibiting them either in Courts or in the Galleries of Noblemen's Houses, yet this is no Reason why we should believe that Comedy was reduced to any Form, either in *Italy* or any other Part of *Europe*, before the Eleventh or Twelfth Century. These Entertainments did at best resemble the *extempore* Farces which the *Italian* Comedians act at this very Day ; and it is even to be thought that their Form and Model were not near so perfect and unexceptionable as that of the present *extempore* Farce.

I don't intend by this to destroy what I have elsewhere said ; for I am perswaded that in the thirteenth Century there were Comedies wrote in *Italy* ; but as they never saw the Public, and were only acted privately, we cannot fix their Date with so much Certainty as we can do that of the Comedy acted *extempore*.

The Theatre in *Spain* begun in a quite different manner : It is true, that neither the *Spaniards* nor any other Nation boasted of acting *extempore* ; but they may justly claim the Honour of renewing and establishing the true Comedy. The History of *Spain* furnishes us with very ancient Accounts of their first Theatrical Entertainments, which were small Farces of one Act, called *Entremesses* or *Jornadas*, which is the Name they  
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now bear in *Spain*. These Pieces consisted of very few Scenes, and were performed by very few Actors. The Action of the Piece turned upon some Subject that was ridiculous and common. All this was wrote down, and being filled with Touches of Wit and Satyre, made a very extravagant Medley, not unlike the Performances of the Latin *Mimes*, for both their Subjects were of the same Nature. These *Entremesses* were exhibited and performed in Thoroughfares, and in the most public Places of the Towns, on occasion of some sacred or profane Feast, such as the Dedication of a Church, the Marriage of a Sovereign Prince, or his Accession to the Throne, or some such Occasion. The *French* did not, till a long time after, imitate the *Spaniards* in this. If we were to judge of this sort of Performances by the modern *Entremesses*, which the best Dramatic Poets in *Spain* have furnished us with, we would have Reason to believe that the first of these were very weak and insignificant Pieces; for such of them as were wrote in the time of *Calderon* are very wretched Performances, and can pretend to no greater Share of Merit than that of being *Farces*, in the lowest Sense of the Word.

These Diversions, intended only for the Amusement of the People, were succeeded



by Comedy, which was established in the same manner as it was in *Greece*. It was exhibited almost without any Ornaments and Decorations, and in Places not at all suited to the Feasts that occasioned it. Tho' the *Spanish* Theatres are now under better Regulations, yet they still keep the old Name of *Corrales* or *Court-yards*. But when People intend to honour them with a nobler and more splendid Name, they call them *Palios* or great Courts. The Theatres which are in the Palaces of Princes or great Men are not called *Corrales* (that being a Name too low for them) but *Coliseos*.

It is evident that the *Spaniards* have insensibly introduced a better Sort of Comedy instead of these Farces: But it is impossible to fix the precise Time of this Change, which put their Stage into its present Condition. It is certain, however, that they can justly boast of being the first who carried Comedy to that Pitch of Perfection, at which we have for some Time past observed it; and they can date this Re-establishment from the middle of the xvth Century, whilst the *Italians* can only date the Commencement of their regular Comedy, from the beginning of the xvith Century; and the *French* theirs, from about the End of the xviiith, that is to say, from the Days of *Moliere*.

*D. Lope de Rueda* and *Navaro*, who were Contemporaries, begun to reduce Comedy to three Acts, which were formerly divided into four : It was usual with the People of those Days to call what we term *Acts*, *Actos* ; and the two Authors, just now cited, stile them *Jornadas* ; which Practice has been follow'd by all the Authors who have hitherto had their Performances printed. But I judge it highly necessary to examine the Construction and Contrivance of their Play-house, by which means we may get some Light with regard to the Antiquity of their Comedy.

The Theatres in *Spain* are erected in a Form quite peculiar to themselves : They are almost square, and have three Stories for the Accommodation of the Audience. There are only Boxes in the first of these ; and these Boxes are not like those of *France*, they being only divided by Rails. The Front Box, and which is immediately above the Door which leads to the Pit and the Theatre, is stiled the City-Box, because it is always taken up by (what they call) *Regidores*, or Lieutenants of the Police. Below this Box, in the rest of the Front, is erected a kind of Amphitheatre, which jutts out a little into the Pit, and is furnished with Seats. They call it *Cazuela*, and none but Women sit in it. Below the *Cazuela*, and on the

the two Sides of the Door by which they enter into the Pit, are two dark Boxes called *Aloxeros*, in one of which, an *Alcade de Corto* (who is a Royal Judge) sits, having all his Retinue before him in a small Appartment which is in the Pit. This Magistrate, however, does not always sit here, 'tis only when the Scene is embarrassed by the Decorations; for at the simple Comedy, which they call *de Capay Spada*, he sits in a Chair, on one of the Sides of the Theatre, with two or three of his Officers behind him.

Above the lowest Boxes on the two Sides of the Hall is a second Row consisting of a kind of Boxes, or little Chambers called *Banes*; in which those Persons who want to be concealed from public View, chuse to sit. On the same Line, and in all the front Apartments, is an empty Space (as large as the *Cazuela*) called the *Tertulia*, where the Monks, Priests, and other Persons, whose Characters oblige them to a strict Observance of the Laws of Decency, sit. On the two Sides of the Pit, are Places allotted for the Men, who sit in the same Manner as they were wont to do in the antient Amphitheatres. These Places are called *Gradas*, and the People go up to them by small wooden Steps. They are inclosed with a kind of Balustrade, and joined to two Rows of Seats which are upon the Stage. At the End of these

these Steps, is another Place joined to the Theatre and as large as it. It is raised a little above the Pit, and is called *Los Tabouretes*, or *Media Lunetta*, and resembles the Orchestrum of the *Italian* and *French* Theatres. In the *Patio*, or Pit fronting the Theatre, are Seats joined to the lowest Steps of the two Amphitheatres we have mentioned. Formerly, the Amphitheatres had no Roof, as they now have, upon that Part of the Pit. So that the Spectators were often exposed to Rain, and to the Inclemency of the Air †.

This Form of Theatres which in *Spain* differs so widely from the other Theatres of *Europe*, may be a Proof of their Antiquity; for 'tis natural to think, that if the Theatres of *Italy* had been erected before those of *Spain*, the *Spaniards* in the Construction of theirs would have copied from the *Italian* Model, as the other Nations of *Europe* have for the most Part done. For Instance, the Form of the Amphitheatres in *France*, which might, nevertheless be copied from the *Cazuela*, of the Theatres of *Madrid*; as the two Rows of Seats upon the *Spanish* Stage, may have also laid a Foundation for the Six erected on the *French* Theatre for the Accommodation of more Spectators.

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† At present they have built at *Madrid* a very large and magnificent Theatre in the *Italian* Taste, except retaining a few Parts of their ancient Form.



The manner of paying, for seeing a *Spanish* Play, is the same with the *Italian*. They first pay for their Entrance into the Hall, *Quatro quartes*, which is equivalent to two Sols and a half *French* Money, and afterwards for a Seat, they pay the same Sum, or a little more, according to the Quality of the Seat. 'Tis usual likewise in *Spain* to hire Boxes for a whole Year; but this Practice is chiefly used by Ladies of Fortune, who are on such Occasions, attended only by their own Relations, or their old Servants. But they now begin to shake off this Restaint, and in a great many Points, act with greater Freedom. If one inclines to take only a single Seat in a Box, (which Men only do) he pays for it two *Reales de plata*, which mount to twenty Sols. The Tabouretes are let at the same Price, and all the rest in proportion.

The Decorations were formerly very inconsiderable, consisting only of a wretched Curtain which concealed the Doors, at which the Actors came in and went out. This Piece of Decoration is not quite laid aside, but is chiefly used in the Comedies, called *Capay Espada*.

The Habits used on the Stage were formerly very plain; but Luxury has now reached the Theatre, and the Actresses (especially in the Opera) are dressed in a very splendid

did and magnificent Manner. Their Authors make Choice of their Subjects from Fables, so as Music may bear a great Share of the Entertainment; and then indeed the Decorations, the Shiftings of the Scenes, the Habits, and all the rest of their Equipage are very sumptuous and magnificent. But when any Piece is acted in the *Salon de Palacio*, in the *Coliseo del Ritiro*, or in the House of some Man of Figure or Quality, they endeavour to vie with the *Italian Theatre* in Grandeur, Pomp, and Magnificence.

It would be hard to tell the precise Number of Dramatic Poets produced by *Spain*; but among those of the best Reputation we may justly reckon *Lopez de Vega*, *Calderon*, *Mureto*, *Solis*, *Salazar*, *Molina*, and some others. With regard to the Number of Dramatic Performances, the *Spaniards* are superior to all other Nations; and without exaggerating, one may say, that there are more *Spanish Comedies* than there are of *French* and *Italian*, from their first Date to this very Day. If any one should call in Question what I say, he needs only examine, for his Satisfaction, the Works of some of the Poets of this Nation.

*Don Pedro Calderon de la Barca* alone has published nine Volumes of Comedies, and six Volumes of *Autos Sacramentales*, every one of

of which Volumes contains twelve Pieces, which in all amount to an hundred and eighty ; and it is certain, that he wrote more which have never been printed. Tho' *Augustine Mureto* published only thirty six Pieces, he certainly wrote a great many more. *Fray Gabriel Thelless* composed a great Number of Pieces, tho' we have only five Volumes printed, every one of which contains twelve Comedies. It is plain by the ancient Register, or Journals of the Theatres, that *Lopes de Vega Carpio* wrote more than one thousand five hundred Pieces, which have all been acted ; but now we can only find, and that too with Difficulty, twenty six Volumes of them, containing three hundred and twelve Comedies. If any one should dispute his Pieces which have not reached our Hands, yet he cannot controvert the 312 which have : This prodigious Number sufficiently shews that the most fertile Genius of all the Dramatic Poets, cannot, or ought not to be compared to *Lopes de Vega*, at least in Luxuriancy of Fancy, and Fruitfulness of Imagination.

*Don Juan Peres de Montabalan* has wrote thirty six Comedies ; and twelve *Autos Sacramentales* : And among all the Authors who have wrote for the Theatres, there is scarcely one who has not been Author of twenty four Pieces, except *Antonio de Solis*,  
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and *Don Augustine de Salazar*, who (tho' each of them has only wrote nine Pieces) are justly esteemed amongst the best Poets of their Age. We need not be surprized, that the Performances of these two Authors are so few compared with those of their Contemporaries, if we consider that *Solis* died very young, and *Salazar*, when he was little more than a Child. 'Tis reported that the former left a Piece unfinished, entitled *Amor es Arte de Amar*, but nobody ever made an Attempt to finish it. It was upon Occasion of *Salazar's* Death, that *Calderon* expressed himself thus, *Emperaba par d'Onde el Aca-baba*, that is, he excelled all others in those Pieces which received the last Touch from himself.

There are six hundred *Autos Sacramentales* printed, besides an infinite Number which never appeared. These *Autos Sacramentales* are sacred Dramas, acted at certain Seasons of the Year, but especially at *Christmas*. We have no Reason to think that they bear any Resemblance to these Dramas, which are so numerous in *Italy*, and which represent the Mysteries of our *Saviour's* Passion, or some remarkable Event in the Lives of the Martyrs or Holy Virgins. No, they are allegorical Performances, which treat indeed of the Mysteries of Religion, but in a very peculiar Manner. *Don Pedro Calderon* is  
esteemed



esteemed the best of all the Poets in this way, and 'tis universally agreed, that he is unrivalled.

The Form of these Dramas is always allegorical, as we have already observed; and the Memory, the Will, the Understanding, Life, Judaism, the Church, Idolatry, Apostacy, &c. are introduced as Personages. Nay, *Don Pedro Calderon* has made Personages of the five Senses, but among these, there are very often Characters from Life, especially of the Comic kind; as we have already observed, the whole Action of this sort of Dramas turns upon the greatest Mysteries of Religion, especially the Eucharist where the Action generally ends.

The *Autos Sacramental des las Plantas* of the same *Calderon*, appears to me a very singular Performance in this way: The Bramble, the Mulberry-tree, the Cedar, the Almond-tree, the Oak, the Olive-tree, the Spikenard, the Vine, and the Laurel, are the Actors. Two Angels appear upon the Theatre; and addressing these Plants, they tell them that one among them ought to produce a sweet and admirable Fruit: They then invite them to a divine Combat for a Crown, which one of these Angels holds first in his Hand, and then hanging up at a Corner of the Theatre, endows them with the Faculty of Speech, and then retires. *The Trees speak,*  
and

and seem to be surprized at their Transformation. The *Cedar* appears upon the Stage with a Baton in his Hand in Form of a Cross: The rest of the Actors are represented as surprized at the Sight of him; none of them having ever seen that Tree before. The *Cedar* makes a long allegorical Discourse upon the Creation of the World, the Formation of Man, and the Production of Animals and Vegetables: He tells them, that as the several Species of Animals, which inhabited in the Sea, the Air, and the Earth, had their respective Kings, so the Trees ought to have theirs. He adds, that he did not, upon account of superior Merit, claim this Prerogative; but that he would be Judge which of them has the justest Title to it. He then goes off the Stage.

The Plants which remain upon the Stage are not a little enraged, that a strange and unknown Tree should arrogate to itself the Right of judging in Matters belonging to them: They enumerate the several Properties and Qualities attributed to them by Mankind; and by these every one pretends to make good his Right, and carry the Point in his own Favour.

In the next Scene the *Cedar* proposes to every Plant to give in a kind of Petition, in which his Title should be proved; which is

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accordingly done. Then the *Cedar* appears holding before him a Cross, the Arms of which are twisted round with the Leaves of *Cedar*, *Cypress*, and *Palms*. The Plants are divided into two Factions; some justify, and some condemn the Conduct of the *Cedar* in appointing himself their Judge. The *Bramble* is ready to burst with Rage, and asks the *Cedar*, who he is? The *Cedar* refusing to tell him so much as his Name, the *Bramble* is more enraged, and says, that he alone is able to root out and destroy a Tree so insolent, so tyrannical, and unknown in the Country. He then advances to the *Cedar* and takes hold of him. The *Cedar* screams out, and complains that he tore his Body: Immediately upon this, Streams of Blood were seen to flow from the Cross; and all the Plants groan at the dismal Sight. The *Cedar* said, he would sprinkle all the Earth with that Blood; to receive which the *Spikenard* and the *Vine* came up to the Cross. The *Cedar* then observing their Compassion and Humility, and holding the Cross still before him, addressed them in these Words:

*Pues Humildes, pues Piadosos*  
*Lo dos recedib mi Cuerpo,*  
*O mi Sangre, en lo dos Solo*  
*Desde oy mi Cuerpo, y mi Sangre*  
*Sera divina tesoro, &c.*

Which

Which is, *Since with Humility and Compassion you both receive my Body and my Blood; in you two alone shall my Body and Blood remain a divine Treasure from this Day.* The *Bramble*, seeing himself besmeared with the Blood, is filled with Despair; and observing that all the Plants fled at the Sight of him, he breaks forth into hideous Lamentations: Then the Cross appears in the Air, and some of the Plants desire the *Cedar* to pronounce, who deserved the Crown. The *Cedar* declares that Humility gave the best Title to it; and accordingly decreed it to the *Spikenard* and the *Vine*. Then the Piece ends. In this manner end all the *Autos Sacramentales*, still concluding with a Thought relating to the Mystery of the Eucharist.

These Dramas are usher'd in by a Prologue which they call *Sacramental*, and to which they give a particular Title that seems to have no manner of relation to the Mystery of the Sacrament, which nevertheless is the chief Subject of the Piece. As for Example, *Loa Sacramental del Loco*, that is, the *sacramental Prologue of the Fool*. At the Beginning of this Prologue the People in the Area cry, *Take Care of the Fool who has made his Escape. Let us run, let us run after him.* The Fool afterwards appears, desiring those who call'd after him not to make them-



selves uneasy, since he is not now the Person he formerly was, and telling them that the Pleasure of being Witness to the Feast had made him come forth, &c. Then in less than two hundred small Verses he makes an Enumeration of all the Miracles and Mysteries in the *Old* and *New Testament*. The Case is the same with the Sacramental Prologue of the *Peasant*; as likewise with that of the *Doublemeaners*; the Titles of which promise quite the Reverse of what is the Design of the Pieces.

Besides the known Authors, there are a great many anonymous ones, who in their Title-pages assume no other Name than that of an *Ingenio*, *Dos ou de tres Ingenios*. A Bookseller in *Madrid* has had the Curiosity to make a Collection of all the Theatrical Pieces of anonymous Authors, published under the Name of *Ingenios*; and tho' he has not as yet been able to make up a complete Sett, yet he has got four Thousand eight hundred. If we add to this the immense Number of Theatrical Pieces, printed with their Author's Names, we may easily discern that all the Nations in *Europe* cannot equal the Number of Plays in *Spain*. I know the Critics will object to me, that a great many of these Pieces do consist but of one Intrigue founded upon the Point of Honour, which has occasioned not only a great Resemblance

semblance one to another, but even made Authors transcribe their own Works. But we are to consider that this kind of Composition is accommodated and adapted to the prevailing Taste of the Nation ; that it is natural for an Author to conform himself, in Works of this kind, to the Turn and Humour of his Country ; and that the same may be said of the *Italians* and the *French*, who for a long time past have only chose as the Subjects of their Drama, Love-Intrigues, differing very little from one another.

As this is the Case, we have no just Reason to reproach the *Spaniards* with having made Point of Honour the chief Subject of their Drama. We ought likewise to own, that it is not the only Subject their Dramatic Writers have touched upon, since we may learn from those who have imitated them, what a peculiar Turn their Ideas have, and with what Ease they not only invent their Subjects, but likewise work up their Fables into a Conformity to the National Taste ; and notwithstanding the great Number of their Comedies, there are very few that in their Plans and Sentiments are borrowed from Writers of other Nations. The *Spaniards*, on the contrary, have furnished Materials for all the Dramatic Poets in *Europe*.

From the Beginning of the *Italian* Comedy, down to the Middle of the seventeenth

Century, the *Italians*, both in Tragedy and Comedy, have made the *Greeks* and *Latins* their Patterns; but for the two hundred and thirty Years following, their Dramatic Performances were for the most Part only Translations from *Spanish* Originals. The *French* may be said to have done the same. In the Infancy of their Theatre, they begun by imitating the *Greeks* and *Latins*, but afterwards translated from the *Spaniards*. Tho' in the Days of *Corneille* the *French* Tragedy appeared with a quite different Face from what it formerly had, yet they even then imitated the *Spaniards*; the *Cid* of *Peter Corneille* and the *Vinceflaus* of *Rotrou* are sufficient Proofs of this; and even in our own Time we see very beautiful Tragedies almost entirely taken from the *Spanish* Language. The *Ines de Castro* of Mr. *Houdart de la Motte* is a Piece so exquisite, that it is sufficient to convince us, that the greatest Genius ought not to despise so rich a Mine, a Treasure in which so many beautiful and precious Materials are hoarded up. And Experience convinces us, that a Man of Taste may thence draw Ideas which not only please, but strike with uncommon Force, provided he knows how to tell them properly.

It is not thro' Ignorance that the *Spaniards* have neglected to follow *Aristotle's* Rules. *Don Lopez de Vega* tells us that *Don Lopo*  
de

*de Rueda* has observed them with great Severity in his Plays; there are also several other Comedies, and Tragi-Comedies in *Spain*, which their Poets rehearse to their Readers, and boast that they are composed according to the exactest Rules of the Drama. *Vega* himself, in writing of the Dramatic Art, tells us, that if the *Spanish* Poets have not subjected themselves to Rules, it is not so much to be imputed to their Ignorance, as the Necessity they are under to please the Taste of the Nation, particularly the Ladies, who in *Spain*, as well as in other Countries, fix the State of the Stage and the Language. But notwithstanding this Negligence, Men of Genius, in translating the *Spanish* Plays into another Language, may easily reduce them to all the Exactness which is necessary. This we see has been done by the two *Corneilles*, by *Molliere*, and many others. Thus we may look upon the *Spanish* Theatre as an inexhaustible Fund, from whence all other Nations may be supplied.

At *Madrid* there are at present three famous Dramatic Writers; viz. *Don Felles de Arebo*, *Don Bernerdo Joseph de Reynoso y Quisones*, and *Don Joseph de Canizares*. The last of these has the most fertile Pen, and the greatest Reputation: None of them have yet published any of their Pieces, because it is not usual to publish them one after another,



other, as is done in *France* ; for there they wait until they have a complete Collection for the Theatre. If those Authors alone are as exuberant in their Fancy as their Predecessors, they will leave more Pieces to Posterity than all the *French* Authors their Contemporaries.

The *Spaniards* observe great Order in their Theatrical Representations: For however they may clap or laugh, there is never any Tumult to disturb the Actors. Their Applauses, like those of the Ancients and the Modern *French*, consist mostly in clapping their Hands. If the Play is ill wrote, or ill acted, they wait to the End before they give their Judgment: If it happens to please, the whole Audience raise a confused Shout, and demand it again next Night, as is done in *Italy*, and particularly at *Venice*: And to prevent Disorder, there is (as I have already observed) always an *Alcaide de Corte* present with his Guards.

As the *Spanish* Actors (who always seek after Truth in their Expression) faithfully imitate Nature, they are no less careful to do so in their Action and Gesture, without departing from that Gravity which is peculiar to their Nation. This I am informed of by the Memoirs which I have received from them on that Subject, and which I can assure the Reader, are authentic. Tho' several *Spaniards*

*niards* acted in *Italy* in my Time, I must own that I could never thoroughly understand them: But having one Day met a *Spanish* Player, I asked the Favour of him to repeat some Scenes to me; which he did in a manner that quite surprized me, and affected me so strongly, that I shall never forget it. My Surprize was still increased because his Habit was very unfit for one that was going to make a noble Declamation; having no other Dress but a coarse kind of Cloak, which he had wore in a Pilgrimage to *Rome*. As I was commending him for his moving Action, he assured me he was but one of the middling Actors of his Country, and named several others then living, of whom he gave me a surprizing Character. Tho' I am inclined to believe him, yet, lest I should be deceived, I shall be determined by those who have seen and understand the *Spanish* Drama.

The *Spanish* Farces are more upon the *Italian* Taste than those of any other Nation. He that acts the principal Part is called *Gracioso*, and very much resembles the Dress and Character of our Harlequin. It is true that the *Gracioso* is not very lucky in the Subjects of his Witticisms; for on every Occasion he swears by the Saints, of which the Poet affects to chuse the most unusual Names, in order to make his Wit more comical, if it can be called Wit. They who  
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Spanish  
Harlequin  
(T. 6)

are curious to see more of this, may look into the *Spanish* Plays, which are full of it. Indeed I am not surprized, in the main, that the *Gracioso* should so nearly resemble the Harlequin of the *Italian* Comedy. I suppose the *Spanish* Theatre to be an Age older than that of *Italy*: This the *Spaniards* themselves pretend; but they cannot trace it back any further. However that may be, it cannot be more ancient than the *Italian Extempore* Comedy. Harlequin was introduced soon after the Decay of the *Gentil* Comedy, if it be true that it came directly from the *Centunculus* of the *Latins*, as I have endeavoured to prove in another \* Place. The *Spaniards* in forming their Theatre followed no other Patterns but those of *Greece*, *Italy*, or the *Extempore* Comedy of the *Italians*, which undoubtedly prevailed during several Ages afterward: Thus it is but natural to suppose that the *Spaniards* imitated those; and it is for that Reason we find so  
great

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\* In my History of the *Italian* Theatre printed at *Paris* 1728, Page 5, &c. the Reader may see that not only the Harlequin is a kind of Remnant of the *Latin Mimi*, and his Habit almost the same, but also that since the Decay of the *Gentil* Theatre, the Habit and Character of those *Latin Mimi* in all their Parts have been continued in *Italy* down to our Times. To prove this we may consult *Cicero*, *Apuleius*, *Diomed*, *Vossius*, &c.

great a Resemblance between the Farces of the two Nations.

The *Spanish* Pieces have commonly a kind of Bawds whom they call the *Capa y Espada*: These are of the same kind with the *Dame Invisible*, or the *Esprit Folet* of the *French* Theatre, and with the *Maison a deux portes*, a Comedy acted *extempore* on the *Italian* Theatre, all taken from *Calderon*. The *Spanish* Theatre is full of Pieces of this kind, from whence Authors of all other Nations may draw numberless Copies. Those which are of a more elevated kind, either by the Quality of the Persons which are introduced, or the Greatness of the Plot and the Incidents, may serve as a Model for Tragi-Comedy and Tragedy; and in copying after, or imitating these, the *Italians* and *French* have made no small Advantage.


From all that has been said we may conclude, that tho' the *Spanish* Theatre is destitute of Rules, yet if we consider the great Beauty of their Thoughts, and the prodigious Number and Variety of Dramatic Subjects peculiar to them, that their Stage has been, and is the great Source of Poetry, and the grand Model for all the Stages in *Europe*.





T H E

FRENCH THEATRE.

 HE Original of the *French* Theatre is not so obscure as those of *Italy* and *Spain*; for the Traces which remain of it afford us a more certain Knowledge of its Rise, than the *Spaniards* or *Italians* have been able to preserve of theirs; and several *French* Authors have fixed these Epochas, and handed them down to us. It is true we sometimes meet with some Anachronisms, but they are not of so great Consequence as to alter the Truth of Facts; and whatever Difference we may meet with in Point of *Time*, or even *Facts*, yet we are still able to account for the true Original State of the *French* Theatre. Ever since the Year 1500 we meet with *French* Authors who have written  
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in the Dramatic Way; and the Dissertations on that Subject have never been discontinued for an Age together. As I own myself not very well qualified to give the *complete* History of this Theatre, I shall content myself with giving the Reader a Hint of what they have copied from the *Romans*, and for that Purpose go as far back in my Researches as I am able.

After I had ended this Treatise in 1734, a History of the *French* Theatre appeared: And as that new Work obliged me to abridge mine, the Reader I hope will pardon me to take this Opportunity of publishing my Remarks and Observations thereon.

The Author of that History pretends that Comedy was re-established in *France* by the *Troubadours* about the twelfth Age; but I don't know on what he founds his Opinion: All that he says upon that Head only shews us the different Changes which Comedies suffered before it was formed into a Theatrical Representation. All the Works of the *Troubadours* which he mentions, and which indeed don't deserve the Name of Comedies, only served to give the *French* Nation gradual and more perfect Ideas of it. With regard to its Origin, I believe we may well raise it five hundred Years higher than the Epocha given it by this new History.

In speaking of the *Troubadours*, that Author

thor asserts that they were the Inventors of Comedies in *Provence*, and that among them there were some who were called Comics, whom he would have us believe were Comedians. It would seem that he has misunderstood the Meaning of the Word *Comic*, which signifies only a *Fool* or *Buffoon*. To prove this I need only transcribe that very Passage of *Nostradamus* quoted by that Author with regard to *Nouez*, who died *Anno* 1220. “ That Poet (says *Nostradamus*) was “ a good *Comic*, and went about among the “ Houses of the Nobility singing, dancing, “ and making Gestures; by which, and by “ the other Gestures proper to a true *Comic*, “ he gained an immense Treasure.” This is an exact Description of a Buffoon: And if in those Days the Buffoons met with greater Esteem than was due to that Character, it was because they added to it the Merit of making Verses, which they rehearsed with some Degree of Art.

I believe he is no less mistaken when he says, that in the twelfth Century they had Comedies and Tragedies in *Provence*, because at that Time they had Pieces of Poetry which went under that Name: But how can he give the Name of Comedy to those Poems which by his own Confession (Page 13) resembled rather *Dialogues* than *Comedies*? To which he afterwards adds, that by *the*  
*Motion*



*Motion of the Body and Change of the Voice*, *Nostradamus* intends to describe the Art which *Nouez* had of reciting his Dialogues alone, speaking either with a Man's or Woman's Voice, or shifting the Place, Gesture, or Air of his Countenance, almost like *Sofia* in the Soliloquy of the Play of *Amphytrion*: Indeed those Qualities may be well taken for those of a *Comic*, i. e. a Droll, but not that of a Comedian.

The *Trouvers*, or *Troubadours*, who composed those different kinds of Poems, called them *Songs*, *Sonnets*, *Sounds*, *Verses*, *Words*, *Lays*, *Satyrs*, *Pastorals*, *Comedies*, &c. Now those two last Titles can only belong properly to Theatrical Pieces; and it is presumable that these above-mentioned were only Poems, or rather Dialogues, which (like some others of that kind) had their Names from their Subject: Thus, for Example, those which treated of Shepherds and rural Pleasures, were called *Pastorals*; those in Verse full of Comical or Droll Lines, tho' rehearsed only by one Person, were called *Comedies*. Perhaps those Authors called their Poems *Comedies* for the same Reason that *Dante* gave that Name to his Poem, (*Comedy* signifying Dialogue) tho' we don't look upon it as a Dramatic Poem. And even in the *Epic*, because the fourth Book of the *Æneid* is almost entirely Dramatic, must we for that Reason call



call it a Tragedy? Perhaps the *Provençois* had no other Reason to call their Comical Dialogues by the Name of Comedy.

I think *Passarol's* five Poems ought not to be admitted among the Number of Tragedies: For properly speaking, they were no more than a Collection of Tragic Verses, in which he introduced some Person who rehearsed, declaimed, imprecated, or discoursed with another, without the Form of Representation, and only by one Actor, who it is said varied his Voice and Gesture. The Plans of those pretended Tragedies mentioned by the Author of the History of the Theatres, are rather those of Historical Facts, such as that of *Joan Queen of Naples* having four Husbands, taken Word for Word from *Mezeray* and *Brantome*; and it is very probable that *Passarol* composed his Satyrical Verses on those Facts, and afterwards named them Tragedies, because according to him the Subjects were tragical; and thus, as I have already observed, all the *Provençal* Poems took their Names from the Subject, as is the Custom of all other Countries at this Day.

In order to prove what I have said, I believe I may safely affirm that no Nation in *Europe* can fix the Date of their Theatrical Performances with any Certainty. And tho' *St. Thomas Aquinas*, who lived in the Beginning of the twelfth Century, doubted if

Comedy

Comedy might be acted without committing Sin, we must not think that he meant written Comedy; for in his Time, and perhaps for several Ages after him, *Extempore* Comedy prevailed in *Italy*. The *Spaniards* indeed pretend that their Theatre is much older than that of *Italy* or *France*; but I have already shewn that they have no sure Ground for that Assertion. In History I think we ought to bring *certain* Proof, and not conjecture for what is advanced, lest we should impose upon those who without duly weighing Facts, take them upon the Credit of the Historian; now of all the Parts of Literature, we are most at a Loss for the History of Theatres, and consequently Authors may more easily impose upon the Public on that Subject.

After all those Reflections, it must be observed, that from the Establishment of the *Troubadours* until the Year 1384, our Author brings no Proof that the *French* had either Theatres or Plays. What he has hitherto called *Provençal* Comedies, are only the Rehearsals of Songs, or Dialogues, either Comical, Tragical, or Satyrical; and tho' rehearsed by one Person in a Chamber, Court, or any other Place, they cannot be named Comedy, *i. e.* a Piece designed for a Theatre.

The Beginning of the *French* Theatre cannot therefore be fixed before the Year 1398, at which Time the Mystery of the

Passion was represented at *St. Maur*. By our Author's inserting the Order of the *Provost* of *Paris* on that Subject, he endeavours to prove that the Representation of the Mystery was begun long before the Year 1398, and indeed I am of his Opinion; but I cannot agree with him that those sacred Representations that used to be made by Clergymen or Laics in Church Porches, or even in Churches, can ascertain the Date of the *French Theatre*, which ought to begin from the Confraternity of the Passion.

By a Quotation which our Author has taken from the eleventh Book of the History of the City of *Paris*, Page 523, he says, that *Anno* 1313 *Philip* the fair gave a magnificent Feast, to which he invited the King of *England*; and among the other Diversions, the People represented divers Shews, sometimes the Joys of the Blessed in Heaven, and sometimes the Punishments of the Damned. The Author says, that these Shews were Representations recited by way of Dialogue. This I am willing to believe for once, and am only sorry that there is not one Pattern remaining of those Dialogues. In the Representation of Hell what Crying, Howling, and Lamentation should we hear: On the contrary in Paradise we should behold nothing but Joy and Adoration. In fine, I must beg Leave to tell this Author that I differ from him.

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In my Opinion all that was nothing but Representations in Figures, void of Dialogue of any kind. As that Feast was made only for the Kings of *France* and *England*, is it likely that these two great Kings, with their numerous Attendants, would stand an Hour and an Half in the Street to see those Representations? No, certainly ; for I believe they only looked at them as they passed, or at most, stopped to hear an Angel or Devil rehearse some Lines, till they could have a small Notion of the Entertainment. These figurative Representations will not appear so strange after reading the following Examples. In the Year 1690 I was in the City of *Genoa* on *Corpus Christi* Day : There they had several Theatres erected in the Corners of the Streets through which the Procession of the Holy Sacrament was to pass. On each of these was represented in living Figures a Mystery taken from the *Old* or *New Testament*. The most remarkable of these was that which had been erected without the Gate by the Fishers of the Town : The Decoration represented the Sea with the Shore at a Distance : There appeared Jesus Christ, as he is described by the Evangelists when he ordered his Apostles *St. Peter*, *St. John*, &c. to throw their Nets into the Sea ; and when they answered that they had been toiling all Night to no Purpose, Christ com-



manded them to let fall their Nets on the other Side of the Vessel: All this was performed by Action and Gesture without Speech. The Actors chose to delay drawing the Net till the Sacrament was passing by the Stage; then they took them up, and found them full of a great Number of the most delicious and rare Fishes, which had been caught several Days before, and kept alive in Water for that Purpose. In the City of *Naples*, at the Feast of the Holy Sacrament, they also exhibit Shows of this kind, *viz.* Our Saviour on the Cross on Mount *Calvary* accompanied with the blessed Virgin, *Mary Magdalen*, the other *Mary*, and all the rest of that Mystery. To do that with the greater Propriety, they make Choice of such Women and young Girls as can best represent the Action, and who have Habits proper for the several Personages. In most of the Cities of *Flanders*, on certain Festivals they have Chariots carrying Stages through the Streets; on some of them they have Gardens and Pyramids: On these Theatres they have Actors who perform all in dumb Shew. The Subject is commonly taken from the *Old* or *New Testament*, or allegorical Objects of Piety. These Feasts they call *Carmesses*.

I was assured by a Gentleman of that Country, that on *Christmas-Day* he had seen

a Toilet set where the Proceſſion of the Sacrament was to ſtop firſt: Before it was placed a fine Lady adorned with Jewels and Precious-ſtones; ſhe ſat adjusting her Dreſs, and putting on her Patches until the Hoſt reſted: After that, ſhe roſe up all of a ſudden, pushed away the Toilet, and kneeled down before the Sacrament. When it was taken up again, ſhe followed it, beating her Breſt until the ſecond Reſt, where ſhe alſo fell down upon her Knees with great Compunction, ſhewing all the Signs of true Repentance; ſhe next pulled off all her Jewels and Dreſs, and remained in the Habit of a Penitent. In that Condition ſhe followed the Proceſſion, fetching heavy Sighs and Groans, and ſhedding Tears in ſuch a manner as drew them alſo from all thoſe who ſaw her. Is not this one Action followed through all its Forms?

In an Electoral City of *Germany* they commonly erect a Theatre in the Cathedral Church on one of the Days of the holy Week, repreſenting the Garden of Olives, where Chriſt after returning from Prayer found his Diſciples aſleep. All this is done by living Perſons: And he that repreſents Chriſt, goes three times and awakes the Apoſtles, and as often returns to Prayer: In a word, we may there ſee a *complete* Image of what happened in the Garden of Olives.

All this Action is performed in Dumb Shew and Pantomime. After these Examples, I think I had Reason to affirm, that the Representation of Heaven and Hell, which I have mentioned, was but figured Representations, and executed in the same manner with those I have been relating.

If we believe the Author of this History, the first Comedies that were acted in *France* were those of *Provence*, and begun *Anno* 1198; if (I say) we believe him, how is it possible that 200 Years afterwards, when the Mysteries of the Passion were first represented at *St. Maur*, there should be so much Simplicity and Ignorance in those Theatrical Representations? Indeed it is highly improbable, as I have already observed, that at the Distance of two Ages after the Representation of the \* *Provençal* Comedy, the same Ignorance should continue so long without the least Improvement either in *Provence* or *Paris*. For surely if it were true that the *Troubadours* had acted Comedy, and *Passarol* Tragedy, we should not have

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\* In the Representation of the *Mysteries*, the Theatre represented Paradise, Hell, Heaven, and Earth all at once; and tho' the Action varied, there was no Change of the Decorations. After an Actor had performed his Part he did not go off the Stage, but retired to a Corner of it, and sat there in full View of all the Spectators.

have been so much at a Loss concerning the Origin of the *French* Theatre.

I would not however infer from thence that Dramatic Poems began to appear in *France* only in that Year wherein the Mysteries of the Passion were exhibited at *St. Maur*; on the contrary I am persuaded, that those Mysteries, such as they were then represented, void of all kind of *Order* or Principle in the Composition, could not be the first which were represented at *Paris*. They must at least for some time before have represented either sacred or prophane Plays in particular Places, Cross-ways, &c. but those Actions (if we consider their Nature) can never be sufficient to establish the Epocha of the *French* Theatre. However that may be, the Mysteries represented at *St. Maur* (I repeat the Assertion) will be found to be the first Exhibition of that kind that appeared in *France*. I know no Author who gives us the least Hint of any older Theatre, and every other Method we shall use to ascertain it, must be vain, ill-founded, and conjectural.

With regard to the Origin of Comedy in *France*, I think we may believe their Historians, who tell us, that several Writers erected Theatres whereon they acted Pieces of their own. We have also Authorities which prove, that in the Reign of *Charles* the Great, the Councils of *Mayence*, *Tours*, *Rheims* and



*Chalons*, prohibited the Clergy from assisting at † Farce-Plays, and the King ratified the Order of the Council by an Edict which was published in the Year 813. Hence we know that the Comedy which had been disused among the *Romans*, had been renewed in *France* and *Italy* by Strollers and Farce-Players, who acted in the Streets and other public Places. We see that to those Shows which by an Edict of *Charles* the Great were declared † obscene and infamous, succeeded the *Troubadours*, *Jongleurs*, and others who rehearsed, or rather sung Scraps of History, Gallantry, and Satyr: And after those *Troubadours* had fallen into Contempt, and were even banished the Court of || *Philip Augustus*, they found Means to establish themselves again in that very Reign, and obtained Apartments in one particular Street of the City, which from them was called *La Rue de Jongleurs*, now *Menetriers*. From that Time they only were paid at Feasts and Assemblies. But we learn by two Orders of the Provost of *Paris*, from the Year 1341 to 1395, that they were prohibited from speaking,

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† The Farce-Players were even then held to be infamous Persons, and none were allowed to bring them before a Court of Justice. See *Marre's Treatise of Policy*, Vol. I. Page 433, &c.

‡ *Histrionum turpium & obscenorum insolentias jocularum, &c.*  
 || *Rigor de Gest. Philip. Aug.*

speaking, singing, or acting in public Places, or otherwise, any thing that might give Scandal or Offence. Not content with those Restrictions, they changed their Manner of Action, and applied themselves to exhibit surprising Postures and dangerous Combats with naked Swords, which gave Occasion to their being called *Battaleurs*, or Prize-fighters, a Name they have retained ever since.

If the Progress of those Farce-players had not been obstructed by Orders of the Councils, and the Edicts of the King which I have mentioned, perhaps the *French* had continued to encourage them. We may even venture to say, that the suppressing of those Farce-players gave Rise to the Buffoonries of the *Troubadours*, who afterwards degenerated into Farce-players no less scandalous than the first, and who were also suppressed under the Reign of *Philip* the August, as I have before observed. From these two Epochas so remarkable, it is probable that the first Farce-players, in the Time of *Charlemagne*, were the Remainder of the *Roman Mimi*, who acted in the Streets and public Places as they do now in *Italy*; and there is good Reason to believe that by this Progress they would have been led by Degrees to build Theatres, if they had been suffered to act without Interruption, as is done in *Italy*.

About the Year 1370, in the Reign of  
*Charles*

*Charles V.*, we may easily observe the Origin of Tragic Declamation in those long Repetitions of heroic Verses which were often taken from the Mysteries of Religion, with a kind of Apostrophe to the Prince to whom they were dedicated, which at times they called the § *Royal Song*. Hence proceeded those mysterious Dialogues which perhaps were acted in particular Places and without any Ornament, and were first represented on a Theatre in the Village of *St. Maur*, but were prohibited by the Provost of *Paris* by an Order dated the 3d of *June*, whereby he forbids all the Inhabitants, &c. to act or represent any Play by Persons, either the Lives of the Saints or otherwise, without Leave from the King, on Pain of, &c. \*

The Actors in those Representations formed a Part of the Royal Household, and in order to make themselves more agreeable to the Public, erected their Society into a Fraternity by the Name of *The Actors of our Saviour's Passion*. *Charles VI.* went to see those Shows, and was so well pleased with them, that he granted the Actors Letters-patent dated the 4th of *December* 1402, which are printed at length in Mr. *De Marre's* Treatise of Policy, Page 437. They  
also

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§ See *Pasquier*, B. 7. of the *Memoirs of France*. Chap. V.

\* Treatise of Policy by *Marre*, T. I.

also built the Theatre of the Hospital of the Holy Trinity, on which, during the Space of almost one hundred and fifty Years, they acted the Mysteries, or other Pieces of Piety and Morality under the common Title of *Moralities*. In the Year 1518 *Francis I.* confirmed all the Privileges of the Fraternity by his Letters-Patents, dated in the Month of *January* that Year.

At last the People, tired with these serious Representations, forced the Fraternity to join prophane and burlesque Farces, which pleased them so much that they ran in Crowds to see them acted. But this Mixture of Morality and Buffoonry displeased the better Sort, who began to reflect that those devout Subjects, which the Simplicity of distant Times had brought upon the Stage, were rather a Profanation of the principal Mysteries of Religion than Shews, and that they ought no longer to be tolerated. About that Time an Epidemical Disease prevailed in *Paris*, which obliged the Parliament to augment the Number of Hospitals, and to order by an *Arret*, dated the 30th of *July* 1347, in the Reign of *Henry II.* that the House of the Trinity should from henceforth be only used as an Hospital, which obliged the Fraternity to demolish their Theatre. But as they were then grown rich, they purchased the Scite of the Duke of



of *Burgundy's* old House, and there built a new Theatre. That Establishment was confirmed by an Arret of Parliament dated the 19th of *November* 1548, which permitted them to act, *but always on this Condition*, (these are the Words of the Act) *that they shall meddle with none but prophane Subjects, such as are lawful and honest, and not to represent any sacred Mysteries.* And by confirming all their Privileges to them, all others are prohibited to act in the City or Suburbs, except in the Name, and for Account of the Fraternity, &c. This Privilege was further confirmed by Letters-patent from *Henry II.* in the Month of *November* 1559, and of *Charles IX.* 1563. Thus the Fraternity remained in peaceable Possession of their Theatre; and in order to shew that they were the sole Proprietors, they had their Coat of Arms cut on Stone (*viz* a Scutcheon supported by two Angels, on which was represented a Cross and other Instruments of the Passion) fixed in the Front of the House towards the *French* Street. This was the ancient Device of the Fraternity, who, now that their new Theatre was finished, and that they were prohibited from acting divine Mysteries or the Lives of the Saints, acted only prophane Pieces. They who are of another Opinion are mistaken: The Stone with the Coat of Arms which I have mentioned, being only an Inscription,  
can

can never be a sufficient Foundation for their Assertion. All the Meaning of it was to shew that they were sole Masters and Proprietors of the Privileges of acting, or causing to be acted either prophane Comedies or Tragedies within the City of *Paris*: And all the moral Pieces that have been acted since, except by the Fraternity, have only been in private Houses, or upon Scaffolds.

In Consequence of the Order of Parliament in 1548, and the Letters-patents of *Henry II.* and *Charles IX.* confirming that Privilege, they continued for a long time to act upon their new Stage under the Name and Authority of the *Fraternity of the Passion*. I say under their Name and their Authority: For after the Opening of that Theatre, the Fraternity did not act *all* the Plays that were exhibited upon the Stage. They thought it was below the Dignity of their Name to mount the Stage only to act prophane Comedies, and immediately gave a Lease of their House and Theatre to a Company of Comedians who were formed into a Body for that Purpose, reserving only two Rooms to themselves, in which they acted as long as their Privilege lasted.

We have neither the Names or Characters of those Pieces which were acted at the Opening of this Theatre, and they only quote the old Farce written by *Pathelin*,  
acted

acted in the Reign of *Henry II.* The Reason given by the Writers of this Age for not transmitting them to Posterity, is, that the Pieces were so worthless, and the Authors so mean, that they were not worth recording. They only mention one *M. Jodelle* who wrote the first Tragedy after the Opening of the *Burgundian Theatre.*

Here we may observe that the *French* have copied the *Italians* in one Mistake, *viz.* they have always reckoned *Jodelle* the first Tragic Writer, tho' he was not; for there were several before him, as *The Destruction of Troy the Great*, printed at *Lyons* in 1485. *The Iphigenia of Euripides* by *T. J.* printed in 1550. *The Hecuba of Euripides* by *Boucherella*, and another by *John Antoine Baif*, one in the Year 1537, the other in 1550; and the *Electra*, or *Revenge of Agamemnon*, translated literally from *Sophocles* by *Lazarus de Baif*, Master of the Requests, and *F. Anthony Baif*, printed in 1537. But as those Tragedies were only Translations from the *Greek*, and *Jodelle* wrote two, *viz. Cleopatra* and *Dido*, which were neither Translations nor Imitations of the Ancients, there is some Reason to allow him the first Place among the Tragic-Writers, and to fix the Epocha of Tragedy from his Works. Perhaps it may be suspected that *Jodelle* imitated the *Italian Tragedies of Cleopatra* and

and *Dido*, written and printed long before he wrote, while the *Italian* Stage flourished: But as I examined and compared them together, I can assure the Reader they are very different. Not but that there were many Translations from *Italian* Plays in those Days, as we may learn from *Du Verdier's French Bibliotheque*, who in speaking of the Comedy of that Time, has the following Words: " A very elegant Comedy, " in which are contained the Loves of " *Erostratus* the Son of *Phelogonus* of *Catania*, and of *Polymnesta*, the Daughter of " *Damon*, taken from the *Italian* and put " into *French* Rhyme. Printed at *Paris* by " *Herom Marnef* in 1545, the Author uncertain."

This Passage of *Du Verdier* naturally leads us to make one Observation which is mentioned by the greatest Part of his Contemporaries, concerning the Establishment of Comedy in *France*. They pretend that as soon as the *Burgundian* Theatre was opened, and for several Years after, no Plays were acted worthy of Notice: And of all the Pieces that were represented in *France* in those Days, they have only mentioned a Farce written by *Pathelin*, the *Eugene* of *Jodelle*, the *Taillebras*, imitated from the *Miles Gloriosus* of *Plautus*, and the *Eunuch* of *Terence* by *M. Baif* in the Year 1567 ;  
but



but at the same time they observe that all the Plays before these were only sorry Farces or Buffoonries. But according to *Du Verdier*, the Translation of that *Italian* Comedy which he commends so much appeared in 1545, and consequently before the Opening of the *Burgundian* Theatre, together with the *Andrian* of *Bonaventure de Periers*, which appeared in 1537. Thus we may reasonably conclude, that while the *Moralities* and *Mysteries* of the Trinity were represented upon the Theatre, Tragedies and prophane Comedies were also acted at *Paris*; and if that was not done publicly and on the Theatre, the Fraternity had obtained that Liberty by the Letters-patent with all other kinds of Representation.

As soon as the *Burgundian* Theatre was finished, the Fraternity of the Passion let it to some Players, who (according to the Historian) immediately formed themselves into a Company. But if at that Time they had no Actors at *Paris* who had been bred to the Theatre, how could the Company of Comedians be formed immediately? For tho' that be none of the most difficult Professions, yet it requires Time and Application to be Master of it. We may therefore conclude, that tho' Comedy was acted in several Places of *Paris*, there were also Comical and Tragical

gical Pieces invented or imitated long before the Establishment of the *Burgundian Theatre*.

Nay, it is certain that the *Bazoch*, i. e. the Clerks of the Attorneys of Parliament acted Comedies long before this Establishment: And we have all the Reason in the World to believe that they acted in Public on Scaffolds, or else on Theatres erected in private Houses. By a Petition of *Marot*, to the King for the *Bazoch*, we learn that his Majesty sometimes was present at those Representations. The Pieces which were acted by the *Bazoch* were commonly Satyrical, and *Lewis XII.* was the Subject of some of these. But he laugh'd at them, and told the Fraternity, that if from henceforth they endeavoured to break their Jokes upon any Person that belonged to him, he would cause them all to be hang'd.

The Fraternity of the Passion were not therefore the only Theatrical Actors: And the Mysteries which from their first Institution had been represented in Churches, in the *Flemish* Palace, on Highways, public Places, and cross Streets of the City, at Feasts, and public Rejoicings, consequently must have employed several Persons in the Art of Acting. After this, it is easy to imagine that the Fraternity would, without much Difficulty, soon find a Band of Comedians to take

a Lease of their Theatre, in order to act profane Pieces.

From all that has been said on this Head, I think we may venture to affirm, that the Author of the \* Theatrical Library has not sufficiently examined what he has advanced on this Subject. In his Remark, under the Letter *A*, on the *Andrian*, he says, “ It was  
“ the first Translation from *Terence*, that had  
“ appeared upon the *French* Theatre, because  
“ the *Eunuch*, which was translated by *M.*  
“ *Baif* in the Reign of *Charles IX*, was not  
“ acted, there being then no Comedians at  
“ *Paris*.” This he repeats again under the Article of the *Eunuch*, without remembering that in the Catalogue of Additions and Corrections at the End of the Book, he says, “ That to the *Andrian* we must add the  
“ *Bonaventure* of *M. Periers*, Anno 1537.” Therefore the *Andrian* which appeared in 1704, was not the first *French* Translation from *Terence*. The same may also be said of the *Eunuch* translated by *Baif* about the Year 1560.

*Charles IX*. who began his Reign about that Time, found the *Burgundian* Theatre settled and furnished with a Company of Comedians; for it was opened Anno 1548 or 49, the 2d of the Reign of *Henry II*. There must therefore be some other Reason which hindered the *Eunuch* of *M. Baif*

from being represented ; and the most probable one is, that when the Mysteries were represented upon the Theatre of the Trinity, and before Plays were acted at the Palace of *Burgundy*, they played Translations from the *Classics* upon private Stages only ; for it is agreed that the *French* Stage was then very lame and poor, tho' afterwards it came to make a considerable Figure. A celebrated *Italian* Writer tells us a Story of the *French* Theatre, which is not to be met with in any other Author : I mean *Girolamo Ruscelli*, who in his Collection of the best *Italian* Plays, printed in 1554 with Notes at the End, speaking of *Cassandra*, a Comedy written by *Bibiena*, says, " That in his Time they had a kind  
 " of dumb Farces in *France*, in which the  
 " Actors, without speaking one Word,  
 " were surprizingly understood by their  
 " Gestures." He adds, " that the Action  
 " was so agreeable, and so taking with the  
 " Spectators, that he was much pleased with  
 " it. I am surprized (says he) that this  
 " Method has never been brought into  
 " *Italy*."

So candid a Relation from a Stranger, who tells us he saw those Farces, is of unquestionable Authority ; and I know not why no *French* Writer (at least that I have ever seen) has thought fit to give us the least Information concerning these Farces. From



the Description of *Ruscelli*, these Pantomimes must have been an excellent Show, and a true Imitation of the Mimes of the Ancients. Admitting this Fact as certain, how comes it to pass that an Art, in which none of the Moderns have made any great Progress, yet was perfectly well known in *France* in those Days, should be so much lost as that the smallest Traces of it are not remaining? We must not imagine that the Farces, which about twenty four Years ago were acted at *Paris* by Labels, are of that kind: For as I have been twenty Years in *France*, and have once seen a Farce performed by Labels, I am thereby enabled to judge of the Difference.

These Farces which were acted with Labels are a very pretty Invention of their kind: Every one knows that the Actors appear upon the Stage without speaking: That as soon as they appear, the Labels fall down successively from the Ceiling upon their Heads; these are filled with Couplets of Songs written in large Characters, the Tunes of which are played by Music, and the Words read and sung by the Pit. The Actors, during that Time, are making Gestures agreeable to the Meaning of the Words, but in those there is very little Diversion or Pleasure: All the Pleasure consists in the odd Custom of making the Dialogues of the Actors to be sung by the Spectators. That is indeed

indeed quite a modern Invention, and yet was not the Effect of Choice, but Necessity. As the King's Company of Comedians and the Opera were possessed of very extensive Privileges, they would not allow the Companies of the two Fairs of *St. Lawrence* and *St. German* to act either by Singing or Speaking. These Strollers invented the Labels in order to keep up their Theatre, and at first drew up a great Number of People to be Spectators, which was a great Loss to the privileged Theatres. There is therefore no Reason to believe that those Farces which were acted with Labels, were taken from the dumb Farces above-mentioned, much less that they were any thing like the pantomime Dances that were in Use in *England* and *France* about twelve Years ago; for *Ruscelli* informs us, that these Farces passed in dumb Shew; and if this Action had been carried on by the Assistance of Dancing and Music, (which bear some Analogy to Language) our *Italian* Author would not have neglected to acquaint us with this Circumstance, which I believe he himself would not have been so much surprized at. And 'tis stranger still, during an hundred and fifty Years there was nothing preserved in *Paris* which could so much as furnish us with the faintest Ideas of these Pantomimes mentioned by *Ruscelli*.

These Shows, which were exhibited at

*Paris* even about the Middle of the sixteenth Century, would induce me to think that they were the Remains of the before-mentioned Representations of the *Pains of the Damned*, and the *Glory of the Blessed*, exhibited in the Year 1313 under the Reign of *Philip* the Beautiful, and which I have asserted were not wrought up into Dialogue, but only represented in dumb Shew. Two Ages after they were exhibited at *Paris*; and because Time gradually perfects every thing of this Nature, they were perhaps in the Year 1550 arrived at that Degree of Perfection mentioned by *Ruscelli*. I must again express my Surprise that this Art should be lost, and the very Traces of it undiscoverable in *France*.

It is indeed astonishing that the *French* Theatre should have remained so wretchedly bad (as we find it to be, not only by its printed Production, but by the Accounts of so many Authors) till the Year 1650, and even in the Time of *Corneille*. They who have spoke of this make no other Apology for it than the Ignorance of the Times when it was in its *Infancy*; for so they chuse to call its first Beginnings. But did not this Infancy last too long? Sure it did; for an hundred Years passed between the Opening of the Theatre of *Bourgogne* and the Days of *Corneille* and *Moliere*, the former born in 1606, and the latter in 1621. Had not their Au-  
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thors (during that Age of pretended Ignorance) the Aids of the *Italian* Theatre, which at that Time flourished? The Pieces which had been acted on the Stage of *Italy* were not then unknown in *France*; for many of them were translated into that Language.

Here I shall only mention the Titles of these Pieces, the Times in which they were printed, and the Names of some of those translating Authors. “ *Josias*, a Tragedy  
“ translated from the *Italian* of *Messer Pi-*  
“ *lone* into *French Verse*, by *Louis des Mazu-*  
“ *res de Tournay*, in 8vo. in the Year 1556.  
“ *The Sophonisba* of *Claude Mermet*, tran-  
“ slated from *Trissimo* in 1584. *The Cartha-*  
“ *ginian* of *Montchretien*, of which the  
“ Machinery and Scenes are the same with  
“ those of *Trissimo* in 1619. *The Two Pro-*  
“ *stitutes* of *Hierome d'Avost de la Val*, tran-  
“ slated from *Domenichi*. *The Counterfeits*,  
“ a Comedy translated from the *Ariosto* in  
“ 1552. *The Necromancer*, a Comedy  
“ translated from the *Ariosto* in Prose, by the  
“ *Sieur de la Taile de Bondaroy* in 1568.  
“ *The Emilia* of *Lewis Groto*, the blind Man  
“ of *Hadria*, in 1608. *The Bravadoes* of  
“ *Captain Spavante* by *Francis Andreini*, a  
“ Comedy translated by *John de Fonteney* in  
“ 1608. *Solyman*, *Emperor of the Turks*,  
“ a Tragedy translated from *Bonorelli* by  
“ *D'Alibras* in 1637.” These Transla-



tions were made by those who were either sensible of a Barrenness of Genius for Invention, or were unwilling to put themselves to that Trouble.

All these Translations from the *Italian* were brought into *France* either by Chance, or by the Caprice of some Writers; for the Source of the *French* Imitation was *Spain*, which for a Century past has been the sole Model for their Theatre. *Corneille* and *Moliere* have in the *Spanish* Drama found excellent Ideas for Tragedy and Comedy; and even the Authors of the present Age do now, and always may find the same, since (as I have elsewhere observed) the *Spanish* Theatre is an unexhaustible Source for the Drama. But the *Spanish* Theatre, notwithstanding the Abundance of its Subjects, and the Variety of its Intrigues, did not at first contribute to the Establishment of a good Taste on the *French* Theatre, and it was necessary that superior Geniuses should point out the Use that was to be made of these Subjects and Intrigues.

At the Time when *Peter Corneille* distinguished himself above all his Contemporaries, by treading (if I may so speak) in the right Path, the *Cid*, the *Horace*, the *Cinna*, and all the other Tragedies of that great Man did not all of a sudden correct the reigning Taste of the Theatre, but by degrees opened the

the Eyes of the Spectators, who at length came to the Knowledge of true Beauty in Dramatic Performances.

This however did not hinder the Dramatic Poets from going still on in their old Road; and some Tragedies in the Year 1660 were so defective and repugnant to good Sense, that one could never believe them to have been wrote in the Days of *Corneille*. The Example of *Rotrou*, a Tragic Poet, is not only worthy of Admiration, but ought to be a Direction to those whom Genius prompts to write for the Stage. After he had wrote one and thirty Pieces, all composed in the *Spanish* Taste, the Applauses with which the *Cid* of *Peter Corneille* was received made him change his Method, and he wrote *Vincestlas*, a Piece indeed drawn from the *Spanish*, but wrought up in a manner quite different from those he had formerly wrote upon foreign Models. His *Cesroes* which afterwards appeared, does not deviate from the new Path into which he had struck; and here we may observe that a great many are deceived, when they ascribe to *Vincestlas* the Change of *Corneille's* Manner. *Racine*, who found the Road paved to him, did not scruple to tread it; and one may say that, without imitating his Predecessor, he has established the Model of good Tragedy in *France*. These two Authors have no longer  
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left the Dramatic Poets in doubt of the best Manner of Writing, and all of them have since endeavoured to imitate the sublime of *Corneille*, or the natural and easy Manner of *Racine*.

As for Comedy, it, as well as Tragedy, stood in need of Alterations and Amendments in order to bring it to Perfection; it did not find the Genius of the two *Corneilles* thoroughly adapted to its proper Character, tho' by their Means it had appeared under a Form less despicable, and more decent than it had under their Predecessors. But to perfect Comedy, a *Moliere* was still wanting, who, destined to be the Restorer of the Theatre and of the true Comic Taste, appeared at *Paris* in the Year 1658. He was first taken Notice of on Account of his two Comedies entitled *L' Etourdi* and *Le Depit Amoureux*, which were the first Essays of his Muse while he was in the Country. A Year after, he published his *Precieuses Ridicules*, which was soon followed by his *Cocu Imaginaire* and his *Ecole des Maris*. These Pieces, which bore no Resemblance to any Works either of the Ancients, or of the Moderns, justly got him the Reputation of an excellent Comic-Poet, which he has ever since kept, and to which I can add nothing by here repeating the Sentiments of Esteem and Admiration, which through the whole  
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of my Writings I have testified for that great Man; and I think it my Duty to confess, that during my five and forty Years Practice on the Stage, I have studied this Author, and never failed, upon every Review of his Excellence, to find some new Beauty, which till then had escaped me.

As to the Dramatic Works and Authors appearing in *France* from the Year 1450 till 1500, we have only an Account of three of them, the Subjects of which are the Mysteries of Religion: The Pieces of this kind which now remain, have been confounded with the Impressions made since 1500. From the Year 1500 till the Year 1600, we may count eighty three Authors, and a hundred and forty seven Pieces of a Comical, a Tragical, a Farcical, or a Moral Nature. From that Period to the Year 1700 we find two hundred and seventy eight Authors for the Stage, and eleven hundred and eighty eight Dramatical Performances of all kinds: Tho' that Age appears so fertile of these Productions, yet it is but mere Show; for three Fourths of them are defective, and almost unknown to the World; and we may even add that most Authors who preceded *Cornelle*, *Racine*, and *Moliere*, and even some of their Cotemporaries, wrote upon that Model which prevailed in the Infancy of the *French Theatre*. From the Year 1700 to this  
Time



Time † we have had seventy Authors and three hundred and fifty Plays, including those under the Name of the Comical Opera. It appears therefore from this Detail, that from the Year 1450 to 1730, or thereabouts, the *French* have had four hundred and thirty one Authors, who were Fathers of one thousand six hundred and fifty five Dramatical Productions, including the Operas of the Academy of Music, which we shall mention afterwards.

Tho' the *Italians* in an hundred and fifty Years produced twice as many Dramatical Performances as the *French* did in two hundred and eighty Years, yet we are not on that Account to give the Preference to *Italy*. The greatest Dramatic Excellence of the *Italians* during that Period, falls short of what *France* can shew in seventy Years. All the Nations in *Europe* ought to yeild this to ‡ *France*, since their Productions, however numerous, are miserably defective and lame. The *French* Theatre, by a Succession of excellent Works, is a Proof of the Character and Genius of her Dramatic Poets, who for  
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† Viz. 1737.

‡ The Author, by not being acquainted with the *English* Stage, has here been very partial to *France*; for it is certain *England* has produced a greater Number of beautiful Tragedies and Comedies than any Nation, and perhaps fewer faulty ones.

the last hundred Years have composed in a right Manner.

Above all, we may remark how much the *French* Drama has improved in Truth, in Taste, and in Wit within these forty or fifty Years; and I can almost venture to affirm, that many of the Theatrical Pieces which were not acted in *France* within that Time, would have succeeded in any other Country and have been Stock-plays. As a Proof of this, amongst all that vast Number of *French* Tragedies translated into *Italian*, and acted with Success in *Italy*, a great many of them were never played above once or twice at *Paris*.

There is a strong Probability that in the Infancy of their Stage, and even towards the Middle of the last Century, the Actors both in Comedy and Tragedy were generally masqued. This I can prove by a Remark of a *French* Author, who says, in speaking of *Hugues Guerru*, surnamed *Flechelles*, and *Gautier Garguille*: “ This Man who was so  
“ diverting in Farces, sometimes acted the  
“ King very well in serious Pieces, and even  
“ hit his Gravity and Majesty with the help  
“ of a Masque and a Night-gown, which  
“ concealed his Legs and thin Make.”

In *France* they highly commend four Comedians, or rather Players of Farces, who, before the Year 1600, rose from Booths into  
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the Theatre of *Burgundy*, where they acted with Applause. Their Names were *Turlupin*, *Gautier Garguille*, *Big William*, and *Guillot Gorgu*: These were all masqued except *Big William*, who instead of a Masque bedaubed his Face with Flower, and had an Art, by the Motion of his Lips, to make it fly upon the Actor who played along with him. All that is told of those excellent Farce-players, proves only that they were Strollers so low, and so childish in their Profession, that their Reputation was entirely owing to the Ignorance of their Age. But if Authors, from the Comedies of *Moliere*, have learned what Truth and Excellence is, the Players, who since the Death of that great Man have acted his Works, know how to afford Diversion to People of Sense and Quality.

At present no masqued Actors appear on the *French* Stage; they don't so much as wear false Beards, except when it is absolutely necessary in playing the Part of an old Man; nor does any peculiar Habit prevail in Comedy, except that of *Crispin*, which is not very old: The Footmen wear Livery, and the Aged are cloathed agreeably to their Years and Character: They are forced indeed to preserve the Habits peculiar to the Characters of *Moliere* in the same Fashion they were in his Time; and when they make  
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any Alteration in this respect, the Actors make a like Alteration in the Verses that allude to the Dress, or leave them entirely out.

The Actors who play Tragedy furnish their Theatrical Habits out of their own Pockets. These Habits which are commonly in the *Greek* or the *Roman* Fashion, are very expensive, being all finely embroidered with Gold and Silver: Those of the Women especially, cost vast Sums. The Players of Comedy are obliged to do the same, but the Expences among them are very unequal. The Footmen, the Bawds, and the old Men have Dresses agreeable to their Characters, and which are not very expensive. But it is different with those Players who act the Parts of Lovers, and represent distinguished Characters in Comedy; these are often obliged to have new Dresses, commonly very magnificent and fashionable; nay, these Actors often invent new Fashions of their own, which are soon followed by the Town. The *Andrians*, and many other Dresses arose from the Stage. There are some Habits designed for *particular Characters* or Disguises, which being very extraordinary, are paid out of the Purse-stock, especially when there are some Diversions extraordinary in the Entertainment.

In *France* the Spectators (I mean those in  
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the Pit) have always behaved in a turbulent Manner. We see by a Regulation of the Civil Magistrate, made on the 5th of February 1596, That *every Person is prohibited from doing any Violence in the Play-house of Burgundy during the Time any Piece is performing, as likewise from throwing Stones, Dust, or any other thing which may put the Audience into an Uproar, or create any Tumult, &c.*

Lewis XIV. resolved to establish Decency and Tranquillity in public Shews: For this effect (besides the old Guard kept by the Crown) he ordered every Person who disturbed the Shew, either by whistling, or making any other Noise, to be kept in Prison for a Year and a Day. This Law is still in being, and is now and then reinforced by the Lieutenant of the Police.

The Theatres of *France* are built almost in the same Form with those of *Italy*, which were the Models of all the rest in *Europe*, except that beyond the Pit, there is a Place a little elevated, called the Amphitheatre. This Amphitheatre has Seats, and is sunk a little lower than the first Row of Boxes, that all the Spectators may have the same free and open View of the Stage. There is also at the Foot of the Theatre a kind of Area, called the Orchestrum, which was formerly designed for the Music, but by contracting their

their Accommodation, the Spectators may now have Seats there. The Entry to it is below the Theatre, and it accommodates about forty or fifty Persons, who pay the same Price with the Stage; and when the House is thronged, the Women sit in it on little Seats without Backs, just as they do on the Amphitheatre. The Theatres here are very small, having only three Ranges of Boxes. There are not here (as in *Italy*) five or six Rows of Boxes; and the largest Pit in *France* contains no more than five or six hundred Persons standing, and very much crowded.

This Custom of standing in the Pit is not very ancient in *France*, for it is evident that the Spectators had formerly Seats in it, as may be seen by a Book wrote by *M. M. D. P.* printed at *Paris* in 1668, entitled *Ideas of the new Shews*. In this Piece some Advices are given with regard to certain Usages that needed Reformation; and in speaking of the Time immediately before a Play, the Author advises (in favour of the Citizens, and especially the Ladies) *to have some regard to their own Conveniency, and to take their Seats in the Pit*, which would be a sure and easy Expedient for preventing Tumult and Disorder, since People stand a far better Chance of being distinguished when they sit than when they stand in a Crowd. This Custom has been followed in the Theatres lately erected

in the Fares of *St. Germain* and *St. Laurence*, where both Women and Men have Seats; only that in these two Theatres they are so modest as to call that the *Parquet* which in othr Theatres is called the *Pit*.

As for the Hour of drawing the Curtain it has not always been the same; for on the 12th of *November* 1609, the Civil Magistrate, with the Advice of the King's Procurator, made a Regulation, by which *the Comedians were ordered (from St. Martin's Day till the 15th of February) to open their Doors at one o'Clock, to begin the Entertainment with such Persons as should be present at Two in the Afternoon, and to put an End to it at half an Hour after Four at most\**. But it appears by the Book above cited, that this Regulation was not observed in 1668; for the Author advises the Comedians, for their own Advantage, to open their Doors in Winter half an Hour after Three, and in Summer half an Hour after Four, from which we may conclude that the Entertainments of his Days did not begin till six o'Clock. The same Author complains of the Custom the Spectators had of placing themselves on the Theatre, which by the bye still continues; and tho' it be vastly prejudicial to Action, in *France* they take no Exception at it, so much is it the Custom.

As to the Admittance-Money, the Regulation

\* *La Marr's Treatise of Policy.*

lation of the Civil Magistrate in 1609, of which we have already spoke, (in order to prevent the Comedians augmenting it at their Pleasure) fixes it in these Terms: *Comedians are hereby prohibited from taking more than five for the Pit, and ten Sols for the Boxes and Galleries, &c.* But this Price was augmented in proportion as Money rose in its Value. Under the Reign of *Lewis XIV.* the first Boxes on the Theatre and the Orchestrum could not be had under three Livres. The second Boxes and the Amphitheatre not under thirty Sols. The Pit not under fifteen Sols; and the third Row of Boxes not under twenty. For about thirty Years under the same Reign, the Entrance-Money for Plays was raised a fourth for the Benefit of Hospitals; so that at present the Places in the first Boxes of the Stage, the Amphitheatre, and the Orchestrum cost four Livres: The Amphitheatre within these few Years is the same Price with the Stage, because in reality it contains the best Seats in the House. The second Row of Boxes cost forty Sols; the third thirty, and the Pit twenty.

The Play-house has two Street-doors, one leading to the Pit only, the other to all the other Divisions of the House. On one Side of these Entrances there is a Place with Bars, thro' which the Spectator receives a Ticket that introduces him either to the Pit



or the other Places, and the Ticket is commonly marked with the Name of the Seat that is paid for. The Receiver of this, upon delivering it at the Inner-Door of the Play-house, gets another there, marked *Counter-marque*, with the Name of the Place he is entitled to. These Tickets are again delivered to the People who are placed to open the Boxes, to see the Company seated in them, and then to shut them up as soon as they contain eight Persons, that is, four upon the fore, and four upon the back Seat. Thus eight may be in one Box, Men and Women, and none of them know one another. But the Truth is, that sometimes it is very troublesome Sitting there on account of the Lady's Hoops ; therefore to avoid the Inconveniency, the Ladies commonly send in the Morning, or the Night before, to bespeak a Box for themselves. Each first Box is equivalent to eight Places, and amounts to thirty two Livres, and they who hire it reserve it wholly to themselves. The second Row pays in proportion sixteen Livres, and with regard to the third, as they are upon a level with the Gallery, no Place can be kept there, but by sending a Servant without Livery to keep one, as is done on the Stage and Orchestrum, &c.

The first Front-Box on the right-hand is called the King's Box ; and all the Range on  
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that Side to the Bottom of the Play-house is called the King's Side. The first Front-Box on the left-hand is called the Queen's Box, and all the Range on that Side is called the Queen's Side; and indeed these Boxes are set aside for the King and Queen, whenever their Majesties honour the Play-house with their Presence, which happens very seldom, because there is a Play-house at Court where the Players act as often as they receive Orders.

If the Princes and Princesses of the Blood come to the Play-house, their Birth entitles them to the principal Boxes, even tho' they may be hired by private People, who are in that Case obliged to take up with inferior Boxes. The Princes of the Blood commonly sit upon the Stage, and then the Players make a Pause in the Action, and all the Spectators rise out of Respect, and the Princes place themselves in the first Seat, which is yielded by whoever possesses it; and when the Play is done, the Player who gives out the next Play makes a profound Reverence to them, and with all due respect craves their Permission to give it out.

Formerly when a new Play had a Run, they acted it every Day for two or three Months successively, which fatigued the Actors and Audience, especially Strangers, who for that Time were obliged to take up with a dull Repetition of the same Play. This

Inconveniency is remarked by the Author of a little Book, entitled *New Diversions*; but at present the new Plays are acted only every other Day, so that during the Run, the Spectators are entertained with other Plays.

The first Opera sung in *Paris* was in 1645, the Cardinal *Mazarine* having caused Musicians, an Architect, and all necessary Workmen to come on purpose from *Italy*; and it was exhibited in the *Little Bourbon*, where, by Order of the same Cardinal, others were exhibited for several Years following with greater Magnificence, but they were all *Italian*. The first was called *La Tresta Teatrale della Trinta Pazza di giulo Strozzi*, which had appeared in *Italy* for some Years before.

As to the first *French* Opera, Mr. *De la Marr* places it in the Year 1672, and the Author of the *Dramatic Library* places it in the same Year in which the Abbe *Perine* received the Royal Privilege, which was in 1671, and which the Year afterwards reverted to Mr. *Lully*. These first Operas were like those in *Italy*, especially in the Machinery; but since the *Italians* have left that off, it is disused in all Places except in *France*, and especially at *Paris*, where that Taste still prevails. It is true, it has never yet been brought to that Pitch of Perfection as it was in *Italy*; but still it gives a great Pleasure to  
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the Spectators who love Machinery, which they do the more as it is to be met with almost in no other Part of *Europe* but there. As *France* had no other Model from which she could take her Opera but that of *Italy*, I was tempted to think that *Quinault* had copied from them in his Opera. That of *Proserpine* was exhibited in *Venice* in the Year 1644, and the *Proserpine* of *Quinault* in 1680: That of *Perseus* was acted at *Venice* in the Year 1665, and that of *Quinault* at *Paris* in 1682. In the Year 1639 the Opera of *Armida* was exhibited at *Venice*, and the same of *Quinault* was exhibited at *Paris* in 1686. It is very probable that these Subjects served as a Model in some measure to the *French* Opera. I have not indeed examined these *Italian* Operas, having never seen them acted, therefore I can say no more on that Subject: But I am led into that way of thinking, because in the Infancy of the *Italian* Opera, it often consisted of very serious Tragedies, in which were introduced the Characters of old Women, Bawds, and comical Serving-men; a Method intirely copied by *Quinault* in his first Operas.

No Spectators sit upon the Stage in the Opera, because that would be a great hindrance to the Execution of the Machinery, the Choruses, and the Dancing, the Stage of the Opera being in its Contrivance nothing differ-



rent from that of the Play-house. With regard to the Price it is double that of any other Entertainment, in proportion to the Preference of Places.

From the Year 1671 to the Year 1737 inclusively, we reckon one hundred and thirty two Operas, comprehending *Castor* and *Pollux*, and the two *Italian* Operas acted at *Paris*, and including all that either had or had not Success.

The Opera is surprizingly magnificent in the Number and Quality of its Dresses; the Embroidery is but Tinsel, yet it is of an excellent Taste, and makes as fine a Shew as the best Dresses in the Play-house. The Diversity and Gallantry of the Dancing-Dresses is very magnificent and peculiar to *France*, and all is provided at the Expence of the Undertakers.

The Decorations of the Stage of the Opera are very handsome, but not to be compared with those of *Italy*, the Smallness of the Stage not admitting of their being either so large or so magnificent as those of the vast Theatres of *Venice*, *Milan*, &c. But their Dancing makes up for all their Deficiency in Point of Decoration.

All *Europe* knows what a Capacity and Genius the *French* have for Dancing, and how universally it is admired and followed; however the World is divided on that Subject at present,

present, some People pretend that true and graceful Dancing is lost, and they condemn high Dancing, especially in Women; others prefer this to the smooth Dancing and the Beauty of an Attitude. I shall decide nothing upon this Subject, only I shall lay before the Readers a Reflection I have made.

Formerly all the Dancers of the Opera in *Germany* and other Countries were brought from *Paris*; in a certain Term of Years they commonly returned to *France* without leaving any Pupils who were capable to establish in their Country a Taste for *French* Dancing, except for the Minuet, the Bouree, and Courant, &c. they were therefore still obliged to recal the *French* Dancers; but at present the *Italian* Nobility who travel, and who formerly were enchanted with the Dancing in the Opera at *Paris*, are not only no longer surprized, but pretend that their own Country can boast a Preference in this Science. This appears to me so much the more unreasonable, because when they are asked in what the Excellency of their Dancing consists, they answer, that for one top Dancer at *Paris*, they have a Dozen in *Italy* of equal Excellency; from whence I conclude, that the present Method of Dancing is neither the best nor the most difficult, as it can be so easily imitated by Strangers, who never could have done it, had it been more simple and full of native Graces.

P A R A L L E L



# PARALLEL

Between the

## *Italian, Spanish, and French* THEATRE.

THESE three Theatres, of which I have given a short History, were without Dispute the first that *Europe* saw. The Original of the Stage in *Spain* and in *Italy* is, as I have already remarked, wrapt up in so thick a Veil of Obscurity, that to dissipate it seems to me next to impossible, or to decide, for Certainty, which of them gave a Model to the other. On the one hand, the old *Italian* Plays leave us in the dark as to the Time in which they appeared; on the other, no *Spanish* Play which I have met with bears Date before the Year 1500, which would induce me to believe it to be later than the other, did not the *Spaniards* assert the contrary, tho' without advancing one Proof to support their Assertion. We shall therefore leave to these two Nations the Pleasure

sure of contending for the Antiquity of their Stages.

The *Italians* in their first Theatrical Performances imitated, perhaps too servily, *Plautus* and *Terence*: They however laid aside in their Plays the Customs and Manners of the ancient *Romans*, which agreed not at all with the Age they lived in. The Amours of the young Gentlemen with the Slaves, or with the Ladies of Pleasure, were commonly the Subjects of the *Latin* Pieces. The *Italians* copying after them, and thinking Licentiousness to be a necessary Quality in Comedy, substituted Intrigues with married Women, Tricks of Monks, Traffics of Procurers, and in short the most scandalous and criminal Acts of corrupted Manners. In this they committed an inexcusable Fault. In vain do they pretend that they aim at correcting Licentiousness, for when it is represented on the Stage, that Gayness and Looseness, with which it is accompanied, is apt to debauch the Minds of the Spectators; and even the Heart that is least corrupted is highly offended at it; for which Reason Prudence ought to prevail with the Dramatic Writers to expose and censure only the *Ridiculous*, the Images of Vice being too dangerous. When the *Italian* Stage amended as to Scandal, it sunk in Genius and Taste, which makes it necessary, in reading their Comedies,



Comedies in that Language, to be acquainted with these licentious Pieces.

The *Spaniards*, on the contrary, represented nothing in their Comedies but honourable Love between unmarried People. The Customs, by Jealousy, introduced into *Spain*, afford room for Intrigue in these sort of Subjects, which in another would produce a Play so uniform, as to be for the most Part void of any Action, The romantic Point of Honour, by which the *Spanish* Nation may be characterised, fills up great Part of their Theatrical Works. Their Servants speak not so freely by far, as in *Italy*; but to make up for that, it is not unusual to hear them imprecating and swearing by the whole Catalogue of Saints. The Mixture of the Sacred and Prophane is very frequent in the *Los Autos Sacramentales*, of which I have spoken. There is one in particular, entitled *Le Chevalier de St. Sacrement*. In this Comedy we see a Church on Fire, so as they despair of extinguishing it. A Chevalier runs into the Flames, and returns with the Host in his Hand. This Action, which elsewhere would perhaps be condemned, passes in *Spain* for a most respectful Mark of Zeal, and the Spectators are at once edified and affected. In these Sort of Entertainments, Farce has its Share, which must be disagreeable to every Man of Sense: But, to  
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take it in the whole, the *Spanish* Stage is that which with the most Ease may be chastised into the purest Decency.

As to *France*, if she did not produce Works for the Theatre so early as the other Countries, she was not very slow in following them, but much more late in arriving at Perfection. Tragedy itself was not exempted from Licentiousness. *Rotrou* began the Reformation, which was accomplished soon after by *Corneille*. \* *Moliere* is the first that brought *Good Manners* upon the Stage, tho' imperfectly. They who immediately succeeded him have been more loose than he. But during the Space of thirty Years, the *French* Stage has incessantly refined itself from that Fault, the Praise of which is due to the Audiences at *Paris*: It is owing to them that their Poets are checked, by denying their Applause to every thing that bears an Air of Indecency. We see Rise given to Theatrical Representations of a new Kind, the Traces of a Model of which we may discern in the *Spanish* Theatre, and some few in the *Italians*, but both very imperfect. There are Characters in the World of too  
low

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\* We don't know if a discerning Reader will agree with our Author in this Criticism, since it is certain that as to Decency of Character *Moliere* has been improved upon by few of his Successors.

low a Station for Tragedy, and yet too high to descend to that kind of Drollery required by Comedy. They accommodate an Action suitable to these Characters, and work it up with moving Circumstances, which occasion an agreeable Entertainment; and in its Consequences this kind of Comedy may a good deal injure Tragedy, but it carries the Catastrophe insensibly to that Point where Religion and Decency requires it should terminate.

This Kind, as it had its Beginning but lately, is as yet imperfect; for when the Circumstances of the Piece are as moving as those of Tragedy, the Mixture of low Humour which interposes, drives from our Minds that Concern which we are ready to indulge. But it is easy to amend this Deficiency, and some bright Genius will doubtless raise this new kind of Writing to Perfection †.

In the most affecting Subjects we may sustain

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† My Work was finish'd when *L'Ecole des Amis*, wrote by Mr. *De la Chaussée*, one of the Members of the *French Academy* appear'd. That Piece may serve as a Model for Productions of this kind. Some however have so far mistaken it, as to pronounce it a Comedy writ in the Manner of the incomparable *Moliere*; and not finding his comical Turn in it, (which indeed ought to have no Place in a Work of its kind) have spoke too contemptibly of it, and by that means have brought a greater Slur upon their own Judgments than upon the Piece itself.

sustain a Dignity of Humour which may arise from the Subject itself; but this is a Perfection only attainable by a fertile Genius. The modern Authors will, without doubt, endeavour to perfect this Species of Comedy, fearing lest they be reproached by the World, of having embraced this Kind, out of Despair of attaining to the Sublime of *Corneille*, or the Humour and Wit of *Moliere*.

In short the *French Theatre* will 'sustain its Glory, and every Day increase it, because it produces Entertainments of a new Sort, when the Audience are tired with a Repetition of the old ones.







# THE ENGLISH THEATRE.



F the Commencement of the *English* Theatre was not so early as the others, it seems to have followed soon after. The Origin of the first Dramatic Representations in *England* had the same Rise with those of *Italy*, *Spain*, and *France*; I may venture to say that they copied from the *Mimi* of the *Latins*, while like Vagabonds they travelled up and down the Country without Reserve and without Shame.

In the Reign of *Edward III*, which began in 1015, and ended in 1038, it is said in a Book printed at *London*, that that good King ordained by Act of Parliament, that a Company of Men called *Vagrants*, who had made *Masquerades* throughout the whole City, should be whipt out of *London*, because they represented scandalous Things in the little Alehouses,  
and

*and other Places where the Populace assembled.*

There is good Reason, tho' no Certainty, for believing that these scandalous Amusements were of long standing in the City of *London*, but were over-looked by all preceding Kings. The same happened in *France* in the Time of *Charlemagne*; and the Statutes published by these two good Kings conceal the Original of the Drama in these two Nations.

After so positive and rigorous a Decree in *England*, nothing that had the least Resemblance of a *Play* could appear in *London*, or the rest of the Kingdom, unless disguised beneath the Veil of Religion. It was therefore by these sacred Representations that the Theatre began to form itself in *London*, as before it had done in *Paris*.

We find in a Book called *The \* Antiquities of London*, that under *Richard II*, who reigned in the Year 1378, the Clergy and the Scholars of *St. Paul's School* presented a Petition to the King, praying his Majesty, *To prohibit a Company of unexpert People from presenting the History of the Old Testament, to the great Prejudice of the said Clergy, who have been at great Charge and Expence, in order to represent it publickly at Christmas.*

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It is therefore in these Times that we can fix an Epocha for the Moral Representations of the *Old Testament* in the City of *London*. We cannot say, however, that they began precisely in that Year when the Petition, we mentioned before, was presented. They might perhaps have been introduced a long time before; I am led to think thus by these Words made use of in the Petition, *A Company of unexpert People*. Had not the Clergy and the Boys of *St. Paul's School* been long exercised in Affairs of this Nature, and used to give such Representations to the People, they would not have stiled Persons, who undertook to represent the like, *unexpert*. But as no *English* Historian, or other learned Person have treated this Subject *ex professo*, it is not possible to clear it from that Obscurity in which it is left. We must therefore content ourselves with establishing its Epocha in the Year 1378, and saying, that the Use of these holy Representations insensibly led them to the prophane Theatre.

*Richard II* reigned twenty two Years, till the Year 1399. Supposing that the Boys of *St. Paul's School* presented their Petition the same Year that the King died, yet the same Petition lets us know, that the Boys had played these Mysteries some time before, and that for Money. And we know the *Fraternity of the Passion* did not begin to act  
at



at *St. Maur* before 1398. It is therefore evident that the Establishment of a public Theatre in *England* was before that in *France*. I do not believe that the *English* preceded the *French* in the acting of Mysteries, which were in *France* many Years before the Representation at *St. Maur*; and much less Ground have we for disputing with the *English* their being the first that exposed their Entertainments publicly, and for Money.

The *English* Chronicles speak of a prophane Representation, which is commonly in that Country said to be the first they had. These \* Chronicles say, that

*The 7th Day of May 1520, the King caused a Masquerade to be prepared, and ordered a Stage to be raised in the Great Hall at Greenwich, &c. The King, Queen, and Nobility came there to the Representation of a good Comedy of Plautus.*

We are therefore to believe that from the Year 1378 to 1520, no prophane Farces appeared at *London* either mixt with the sacred, or distinct from it, as happened in *France*. And if really that *Good Comedy of PLAUTUS* was the first that appeared, we must yield to the *English* the Merit of having opened their Stage with a GOOD prophane Piece, whilst the other Nations in *Europe* began theirs with the most wretched Farces.



The same thing may be said with regard to Tragedy, the first of which was played before Queen *Elizabeth*; and we find in the Appendix to the Lives of the *English* Dramatic Poets, that

“ The Lord *Buckhurst*, afterwards Earl  
 “ of *Dorset*, writ, in Conjunction with Mr.  
 “ *Norton*, a Tragedy, valued in those Days,  
 “ of which there were three Impressions.  
 “ The Title to the first Edition is FORREX  
 “ and PORREX printed in 8vo. at *London* in  
 “ 1565 by G. G.”

The second Edition was printed by Consent of the Authors with this Title, “ The  
 “ Tragedy of *Forrex* and *Porrex* without  
 “ Augmentation or Diminution, as it was  
 “ acted before the Queen nine Years ago,”  
 that is, on the 18th of *January* 1565, by the Gentlemen of the *Inner-Temple*, printed in 8vo. at *London*.

The Title of the third Edition is, “ The  
 “ Tragedy of *Gorbeduc*, of which three Acts  
 “ are written by *Thomas Norton*, and the  
 “ other two by *Thomas Sackville*, published  
 “ as it was presented before the Queen in  
 “ the *Inner-Temple*, printed in 4to. in *London* 1590.” In this last Edition † the *English* Writer lets us know that they changed the

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† A Mistake: For *Buckhurst* was called *Sackville*.

the Title and the Name of one of the Authors : I can't imagine for what Reason.

Thus we see the first perfect Comedy and the first perfect Tragedy of the *English*, which gives not a little Glory to that Nation. The Perfection of the Comedy is not to be questioned, seeing it was one of the *good* Comedies of *Plautus*. But as to the Tragedy I don't know, if upon the sole Report of that Writer, who speaks in its Praise, and is influenced by *its great Reputation*, if we may form the same Opinion of it, and implicitly rely upon the Judgment of that Age. It was the first Tragedy that had appeared in that Country. The *French*, their Neighbours, could shew them no Original fit to copy after, because what they had were very low. And *Italy*, whose Theatre had attained to the highest Pitch of its Glory, was at too great a Distance for *England* to imitate. We may therefore doubt of the Perfection of this first *English* Tragedy ; and altho' in that Age it might have been accounted excellent, yet might it not be so in reality : We shall form a better Judgment of this in prosecuting the History of their Theatre.

In the Life of *Shakespear* prefixed to his Works, we read that " in the Year 1590 there were professed Comedians in *London*, but they had no established Theatre, and played no

Tragedies, for then they had no Idea of them in *London*." Tho' this is speaking very positively, yet it appears to be false, because Tragedy was known in the former Part of that Reign, if that, of which we have given an Account, was acted. It is not to be thought that in the Space of twenty five Years which had passed since *Gorbeduc* appeared, all Remembrance of it could be effaced; the three Editions which I have mentioned were certainly sufficient to preserve its Memory. Wherefore I think that to judge rightly of this, we should conclude that Tragedy was unknown in *England*, because *Gorbeduc* was the only one, and it not having been acted in Public, but confined to the Court, the common Players not having a Relish for it, perhaps this kind of Dramatic Poetry was unknown till *Shakespear's* Time.

*William Shakespear* for a small Trip of Youth was obliged to leave the Country and come up to *London*, where he commenced Player. He was blessed with Genius and Capacity; and wrote a † Comedy much liked by Queen *Elizabeth*. She, to express her Regard for *Shakespear*, granted a Patent to the Comedians, declared them her Servants, and formed them into a Company, with proper

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† The Merry Wives of Windsor.

per Appointments, and the Use of a Theatre.

In the Year 1596 *Shakespeare*, at the Age of thirty three, gave the World his first Tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*; and the Year after he produced *Richard II.*

*James I.*, who succeeded Queen *Elizabeth*, by a Licence confirmed the Privileges of that Company of Comedians: He named nine new Actors, and stiled them his Servants. This Licence is conceived in Terms, Part of which I think necessary to repeat; it says towards the End, “ And we permit them to  
“ perform the said Plays, Tragedies, Inter-  
“ ludes, Moral Pieces, Pastorals, Stage-  
“ Plays, and such like in Public, and for  
“ their greater Advantage, (when the Infection  
“ of the Plague shall cease) as well in our  
“ House called the *Globe*, in our County of  
“ *Surry*, as in the Cities, Halls, Public  
“ Places, or any other privileged Place, and  
“ in any Borough of our said Kingdom.”

In this Licence of *James I.* two Things are remarkable. In 1603, when it was published by the King, the *English* Comedians performed all these several kind of Theatrical Representations, that we find mentioned in their Charter: This Theatre therefore must have been of long standing, since all the different kinds of Dramatic Poems were then known, which could not be expected in the



Practice of twenty or thirty Years. Mention in the Licence is likewise made of public Places, and which lets us see that in *England*, as well as in *France*, they used upon Scaffolds to play as well moral as prophane Plays. Plays being twice mentioned, first singly, and a little lower with the Addition of Stage-Plays, leads us to know that two Species of Comedy are spoken of: Thus making apparent Distinction between those that were played in public Places, and those played on an established Theatre. We are therefore forced to conjecture, that during the two hundred Years from 1378, moral Representations and prophane Farces had been performed, and that they were at least tolerated by the Kings, tho' not licenced by their Authority.

Before *Shakespear* embraced the Profession of a Player, there was a Theatre in *London*, that is to say, Dramatic Performances had been exhibited there for a long time. It is true that little Mention is made of it, only in the Life of that Poet we read, that to him we owe *Ben. Johnson*, who by his Encouragement writ his Comedies. Thus by these two Poets, the greatest that their Age or Country ever produced, *England* is enabled to fix the Epocha of her Theatre.

It is surprising that Tragedy first rose in *England* by every Horror that human Imagination

gination can suggest, and that the Taste for it still remains, notwithstanding the Attempts of some Authors, who have endeavoured to give it another Turn. I have examined into the Reason of it, and tho' I may be mistaken, yet shall I always speak what I think.

It ought not to be questioned that the chief Aim of a Dramatic Writer is to please the Spectators, and that to do this, he must be acquainted with the Bent of their Inclinations. When the Poet fancies he has attained to that Knowledge, he studies to set before them Images and Actions suitable to the Taste of that Nation for which he writes.

When that is supposed, it must be granted that Theatrical Pieces let us into the general Character of their several Countries, and that without any other Light than what is struck out of the ancient and modern Plays, we might judge that the *Grecians* were violent and given to Pleasure; that the *Romans* were sensual, but always with an Air of Grandeur; With the *Romans* we may rank the *Italians*, with some little Difference; we may say that the Quality of the *Spaniards* is a noble Braveness, that they are punctilious, and mysterious; and the *French*, on the other hand, are witty, airy, and gay to Excess: And of all these different Characters, I don't know if any is far distant from Truth. One there-

therefore might be tempted to believe from *Shakespear's* presenting to them the most horrible Objects, that the *English* are cruel, inexorable, and next to inhuman, whereas indeed nothing is less true. The *English* are gentle, humane, extremely polite, but generally pensive to Excess. It is this last Quality that forms their general Character, as their own Writers agree. Let us proceed.

The *English* Dramatic Poets have, beyond Imagination, stained their Stage with Blood; of this I shall give you two Examples only. In the Tragedy of *Hamlet*, five principal Characters die violent Deaths during the Action. About the middle of the Play we see the Funeral of a Princess; the Grave is dug on the Stage, out of which are thrown Bones and Skulls: A Prince comes then and takes up a Skull in his Hand, which the Grave-digger informs him was the Skull of the late King's Jester; he makes a moral Dissertation upon the Skull of the Jester, which is reckoned a Master-piece: The Audience listen with Admiration, and applaud with Transport: And it is for that Scene that the major Part of the Spectators resort to the Play-house when *Hamlet* is performed. In the Tragedy of the *Moor of Venice*, among other Things, the *Moor* inflamed with Jealousy, goes to search for his Wife, who lies awake in Bed; he speaks with her, and after strong Conflicts  
between

between Love and Rage, he resolves to be revenged, and strangles her before the Eyes of the Spectators. Were I to give a Detail of every thing horrible that is to be found in *English* Tragedy, it would be hard to be persuaded of the *English* being so very gentle and humane, as I have painted them, and as they are in Effect: We should rather be induced to think, that the Poet presented for the Entertainment of his Countrymen, what was most agreeable to their Cruelty and Ferocity. If that was not his Motive, why did he entertain the Nation with Objects so terrible? After all these Reflections, I will venture to give my Opinion.

The principal Character of the *English* is, that they are to be plunged in Contemplation, as I observed before. It is owing to this their pensive Mood, that the Sciences of the most sublime Nature are by the Writers of that Nation handled with much Penetration, and that Arts are carried to that Pitch of Perfection which they are now arrived at; because their native Melancholy supplies them with that Patience and Exactness which other Countries have not.

To pursue my Reasoning; I believe that were there to be exhibited on their Stage, Tragedies of a more refined Taste, that is, strip of those Horrors that sully the Stage with Blood, the Audience would perhaps fall asleep.



asleep. The Experience which their earliest Dramatic Writers had of this Truth, led them to establish this Species of Tragedy, to raise them out of their contemplative Moods, by such bold Strokes as might awaken them.

For the same Reason, the *English* Comedies are crowded with Incidents, insomuch that having adapted to their Stage some *French* Plays, the Authors have doubled the Intrigue, or they have joined them with another Plot to keep the Spectator in Breath, and not allow him Time to wander with his Thoughts. The *Miser* of *Moliere* among others, which in the Original is perhaps too full of Intrigue, has much more in the *English* Translations. *Harpagon's* Mistress, in order to raise his Aversion, making great Expence at the Charge of the old Fellow, occasions an additional Intrigue to that Play, which increases the Plot beyond measure.

I have said that the *English* Poets, with Design to make lively Impressions on the Imaginations of the Spectators, fill their Tragedies with Horror, and over-charge their Comedies with Incidents; with regard to the latter we may add that they have form'd Scenes and Dialogues obscene to Excess. It is not my Design to particularise any Comedy of that Sort which I have seen acted at *London*, but I shall refer to Mr. *Collier's* Criticism on the *English* Stage. He reproaches the  
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the Poets of his Country with their Licentiousness; and by comparing the ancient Stage with the modern, he shews them that no Instance of Licentiousness on that Stage was ever equal to what appears on the *English* Theatre: But the Obscenities and the Complication of Events in Comedy, have at least as much Force to move the Audience, as the Horror in their Tragedy has Power to touch them. It is, perhaps, by Design that the Authors have written in the Taste which we now have remarked. It were to be wished that these Spectators, as well as the Poets, were once well convinced of the true Object of Dramatic Pieces; for the Terror which ought to be inspired by Tragedy, consists not in the Effusion of Blood, and the Representation of Death.

In short *Oedipus* who tore out his Eyes, and *Jocasta* who hang'd herself, do not so much touch the Audience, as the Reflection of *Oedipus* on being guilty of Incest and Parricide. Had *Athaliah* actually perpetrated the Massacre of the High Priest and *Levites*, as she threatned, we should not be so sensibly touched, as by her Conversation with young *Joas*, with Design to carry him away and destroy him. Does not every one tremble in *Iphigenia*, thro' the Fear of seeing the Daughter sacrificed by her Father? Are we not affected in the same manner in *Phocas*, who  
several

several times is upon the Point of causing his Son to be killed without knowing him. The Horror which reigns in these two *English* Tragedies that I have named, and in all the others, has not such Force to affect and touch the Spectators, as the real Terror of which I have given some Instances.

I can't tell what Hopes to entertain of the Reformation of the *English* Theatre, but we have Proofs to believe it will not be sudden. It is now twenty five Years since Mr. *Addison's Cato* appeared at *London* with the universal Applause of the whole Nation. Without entering into the Merits of that Tragedy, let us only observe with what Judgment the Poet chose a Subject in which both the Parties of the Nation were at the same Time interested, and he conducted it in such a Manner, that both were equally pleased.

It is Mr. *Addison* who has with admirable Art put in Execution the grand Point of which I have spoken, to study well the Inclinations of the Spectators, in order to please them. One would imagine that this Tragedy would have new-modelled the *English* Stage: But the new Tragedies since that Time writ in the ancient Taste, and particularly one of the latest, entitled *George Barnwell*, which met with great Success, leave us no Ground to presume that ever there will be a Change at all. They say, however, that  
they

they have begun to exhibit some Things in the refined Taste, which met with no bad Reception from the Public. Was this successful Beginning prosecuted to Advantage; were the *English* Poets guided by Reason and Truth, the Spectators might improve, and the *French* Stage in a little Time meet with a formidable Rival. No Force or Beauty is wanting in the *English* Language, to express the noble Sentiments and sublime Thoughts with which their Tragedies are filled. Nor has it less Elegance for Wit and Humour in Comedy, which is often set off with more Spirit than in the Plays of other Countries.

Amongst the Crowd of *English* Poets, Mr. *Congreve* is most esteemed for Comedy. He was perfectly acquainted with Nature; and was living in 1727, when I was in *London*; I conversed with him more than once, and found in him Taste joined with great Learning. It is rare to find many Dramatic Poets of his Stamp. The Architecture of their Play-house is beautiful and commodious. All the Pit is in Form of an Amphitheatre, where both Sexes sit promiscuously, which afford a very agreeable Sight. There is but one Row of Boxes, and above are two Galleries with Benches one above another, where People sit. It is about forty Years since the *English* Nobility went into the Taste of  
*Italian*



*Italian* Operas, which they support with great Magnificence, and at an astonishing Expence. They draw to *London* the best Singers in *Italy*, who leave their Country without any Regret, tho' there Music meets with very great Encouragement. The Prices for Admission into the House are much the same as at *Paris*.

There are commonly two Theatres for acting Comedies and Tragedies, which are nobly ornamented with Decorations and Dresses. As to the Actors, if after forty five Years Experience I may be intitled to give my Opinion, I dare advance that the best Actors in *Italy* and *France* come far short of those in *England*. The *Italian* and *French* Players, far from endeavouring at that happy Imitation of Nature and Justness which forms the Beauty of Action, affect a forced, stiff Manner of Acting, which never fails to mislead the Audience. To form the better Judgment of both, let us compare them impartially. The *English* Authors copy Truth, and are at great Pains not to flag on the Stage. As for me, I have always thought, nor have I been singular in my Opinion, that pure simple Nature would be cold upon the Stage. This I have experienced in several Comedians. Wherefore the Action should be heightned a little, and without straying too far from Nature, some Art added in the Speaking.

Speaking. As a Statue to be placed at a Distance should be bigger than the Life, that, notwithstanding the Distance, it may appear in due Proportion to the Spectators, so the *English* Actors have the Art, if I may use the Expression, to heighten Nature, so as it ought to be shown at a Distance, to let us see that it is pure Nature which they represent. When I was at *London* a thing happened, which, for its singularity, deserves Notice. At the Theatre in *Lincoln's Inn-Fields* I happened to be at the Acting of a Comedy, the principal Plot of which I was a Stranger to, but with Ease could understand an Episode, which the Author without doubt had placed in the Intrigue: It is that Scene which we have so often seen in *Crispin Medecine*. The sole Alteration that is made therein, is the introducing an old Man in Place of a Footman, who by his Bustle excites the Laughter of the Audience, while he places himself in the room of a dead Body which the Physician is to dissect. The Scene was thus disposed; the amorous old Gentleman entertains himself with a Footman belonging to his Mistress's House; the Footman either hears, or pretends to hear, a Noise, and desires the old Fellow to hide himself; all the Doors being locked, he advises him to place himself on the Board on which the Body is laid. After some Diffi-

culties made, the old Man consents to it, and does precisely what *Crispin* does in the *French* Comedy: But to give it the greater Air of Truth, the Footman makes the old Man strip to his Shirt; the Operator comes; Chirurgical Instruments are brought; he puts himself in order to begin the Dissection; the old Man cries out, and the Trick is discovered.

He who acted the old Man executed it to the nicest Perfection, which one could expect in no Player who had not forty Years Exercise and Experience. I was not at all astonished in one respect, but I was charmed now to find another Mr. *Guerin*, that excellent Comedian, Master of the Company at *Paris*, which had the Misfortune to lose him in our Time. I was mistaken in my Opinion that a whole Age would not produce such another, when, in our own Time, I found his Match in *England*, with the same Art, and with Talents as singular. As he played the Part of an old Man, I made no manner of doubt of his being an old Comedian, who, instructed by long Experience, and at the same time assisted by the Weight of his Years, had performed it so naturally. But how great was my Surprise, when I learn'd that he was a young Man of about twenty six! I could not believe it; but I own'd that it might be possible, had he only used a trembling and  
broken

broken Voice, and had only an extreme Weakness possessed his Body, because I conceived it possible for a young Actor, by the Help of Art, to imitate that Debility of Nature to such a Pitch of Exactness; but the Wrinkles of his Face, his sunk Eyes, and his loose and yellow Cheeks, the most certain Marks of a great old Age, were incontestable Proofs against what they said to me. Notwithstanding all this I was forced to submit to Truth, because I knew for certain that the Actor, to fit himself for the Part of the old Man, spent an Hour in dressing himself, and that with the Assistance of several Pencils he disguised his Face so nicely, and painted so artificially a Part of his Eye-brows and Eyelids, that at the Distance of six Paces it was impossible not to be deceived. I was desirous to be a Witness of this myself, but Pride hindered me; so knowing that I must be ashamed, I was satisfied with a Confirmation of it from the other Actors. *Mademoiselle Salle*, among others who then shone upon that Stage, confessed to me, that the first time she saw him perform she durst not go into a Passage where he was, fearing lest she should throw him down should she happen to touch him in passing by.

I flatter myself that this Digression will not be altogether useless; it may let us know to what an Exactness the *English* Comedians



carry the Imitation of Nature, and may serve for a Proof of all that I have advanced of the Actors on the *English* Theatre.

Reason alone sketched out the first Rules of the Theatre in the *Grecian* Tragedies: *Aristotle* established an Art, and made the Laws for us; the *Latins* adopted them, and Moderns have confirmed them by the Heaps of Poems, by the so great Number of Dramas, which the *Italians*, and, still more, the *French* have already, and yet continue to supply us incessantly with. One therefore can't step aside from these Rules without incurring the Censure of the whole World. Otherwise nothing can be objected to the *English* Poets, but their having received a particular Maxim, which differs from those of other Countries, and which does not want its Defenders to support it. In such a general Agreement of Opinions authorized by Good-Sense, I am persuaded that the Men of Learning in *England* are sensible of the Irregularity of their Stage, and that (like the *Spaniards*) they are the first who take Notice of it. Were it permitted to depart from these Rules, which Reason itself hath dictated, the *English* Theatre would be able to balance in Reputation both the Ancient and the Modern. The Excellence of the *English* excels all the Beauties which the other Theatres in *Europe* can shew us; and if  
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some time or other the *English* Poets would submit themselves to the three Unities of the Theatre, and not expose Blood and Murder before the Eyes of the Audience, they would at least partake of that Glory which the other more perfect modern Theatres enjoy.





T H E  
FLEMISH *and* DUTCH  
T H E A T R E S.



THE *Flemish* and *Dutch* Theatres ought to be considered but as one and the same, since they use one common Idiom: For the *Flemish* Language being no other than the *Dutch* Tongue corrupted by the Neighbourhood of the *Walloons* and *Picards*, those who have wrote in *Flanders* made Use of the *Dutch* Idiom as the noblest and fullest of Energy, and which approached nearest to the Mother-Tongue, which is the *German*. They both went under the Name of the *Flemish* Theatre, when the two Nations were under the Government of the same Master, and their Sovereigns resided in *Flanders*; but since the dismembering of the United Provinces, we must speak of them separately. It was from  
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the Representations of *Mysteries*, that the Theatre of *Flanders* had its Rise, as the others had, with this Difference however, that as soon as the *French* Nation grew polished, it perceived the Indecency which the Simplicity of these first *Representations* concealed, and by degrees they gave Place to Shows better understood and more regular : But *Flanders* had not had the same Advantage, for Theatrical Shows having ceased in that Country, the Simplicity, void of all Politeness and Taste, remained in its original State. I could even be tempted to believe, that the *Flemish* as well as the *Dutch* took for their Model, at their first setting out, the *English* Theatre rather than the *French*, seeing that they followed the same Method, and did not adopt the *French* Theatre but since *Corneille*. At the Time when the *Flemish* Theatre might have been brought to Perfection (after the Example of other Nations) their Sovereigns changed the Place of their Residence, and ever since that Period we may say it has ceased entirely. They have been now a long time without a Theatre ; and all that they preserve, is the Representation of the *Passion*, in the same Simplicity and Grossness with which it began, and which is acted at certain Times of the Year by Societies of Burghers, who act also sometimes paltry Translations of *French* Comedies. In short,



we may say that since the Year 1566, from the Time of the Civil Wars, the *Flemish* Theatre has not subsisted: It was not so in *Holland*, where it has been cultivated; and I shall speak of their Theatre alone, in the Sequel. The *Dutch* Theatre had its Original from what they call in that Country *Reden Ryckers Kameren*, Companies or Societies of Rhetoricians and Poets, who may be compared to the first *Troubadours* of *Provence*, as I shall shew more fully in the Description of the *German* Theatre. These *Companies* took their Origin from the \* natural Poetical Genius of the Nation, (which is so great, that even their most ancient Chronicles are in Verse) and the Eagerness of the People for Shows.

These *Societies* were also common in *Brabant*: They had fourteen at *Antwerp*; that of the *Gilli-Flower*, and that of the *Olive-Branch* were the most distinguished: There were † nineteen at *Ghent*; they had them in  
*Holland*

\* This Genius is still the same, but better regulated. If any Person of Distinction is married, dies, is promoted, &c. the Poets immediately take the Field, and ten, fifteen, or twenty Epithalamiums, Elegies, or Panegyrics appear, all which are printed in the same manner as the *Theses* at *Paris*.

† This may be proved by a Collection of Allegorical Pieces (*Zinnespel*) represented by the nineteen Chambers of  
*Ghent*.

*Holland* in almost every City, as *Harlem*, *Gouda*, *Schiedam*, *Alcmaar*, *Leyden*, *Ulaerdinge*, *Rotterdam*, † &c. This Custom did not prevail in the Cities alone, but also in many Villages. In the Year 1708 they had still one in the Village of *Voorschooten* near *Leyden*, and another in the Village of *Loofduynen* near the *Hague*; and there is now actually one of them in the great Village of *Wassenaar* near *Leyden*.

The Members of these *Societies* were the Wits of the Place, who were applied to for Epithalamiums, for Elegies, for Panegyrics, or Compliments, when any one was preferred to an Office, as I have said before. The same composed Theatrical Pieces, which they acted in the *Society-Room* (thus they are entitled *Kamerspel*, that is, *Society-Plays*) and very often in the Country in the Time of Fairs (*Kermis*) in public upon Scaffolds. Seldom had they any Women;

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*Ghent*, printed in 1539. And by another Collection of fifty Pieces, Allegories, Prologues (*Voorspel*) or Farces (*Naspeel*) represented by the fourteen Chambers of *Anvers*. Printed by *Silvius* at *Anvers* in 1562.

‡ *Konstouende Juweel*, or the Jewel of Art, is a Proof of this. It is a Collection of fourteen Allegorical Pieces, composed and represented by several Chambers of Orators at *Harlem*, printed at *Zwoll* in 1607; and *Ulaerdinge Rederyksberg* (the *Parnassus* of *Ulaerdinge*) or a Collection of sixteen Pieces of the Orators of the Chambers in *Ulaerdinge*, printed in 1617, &c.

men; they were Men who personated the Characters. Oftentimes these *Reden Ryckers* (Poets) of one Village went to perform their Pieces at the Fair of another Village, which in its Turn did the like to the other; or these *Societies* transported themselves in a Body to assist at certain Feasts and Representations in another Town or Village; and this they did with Ceremonies, almost the same with those they observe in *France*, when the Companies of the *Arquebuse* (Gunsmiths) of one Town go to shoot for the Prize in another; and sometimes there were Societies, who even performed from one Town to another, and disputed the Prize of Wit, and after the Performance was over, the Wits of the Company recited Extempore Pieces, or Madrigals, Sonnets, &c. Such was the Origin of the *Dutch* Theatre, of which it would be difficult to fix the Epocha, since that poetical Genius, and that Passion for Shows, Dancing, and Songs, are as ancient as the Nation itself: However it is probable that these *Societies* were established before the *Burgundy* Family reigned in the Country.

The most ancient Piece of the *Dutch* Theatre is *De Spiegel der Minne* (the Mirror of Love) by *Colin Van Ryffele*, printed at *Haerlem* in 1561, in 8vo. In the ancient Tragedies they represent the Action just as it happened: Thus in the Story of *Egmond* and

and *Horn*, they cut off the Heads of these two Earls upon the Stage; in another Piece the Hero stabs himself, and falls down dead, after having deluged the Stage with the Blood contained in a Bladder which he had under his Arm: *Haman* in his Tragedy is hanged, and *Mordecai* makes the Tour of the Theatre mounted on a *Rosnante*. In *Tamerlane*, that Prince appears on Horseback with *Bajazet*: In short, in the Death of *Conradin* King of *Naples*, an Officer goes to take him out of his Dungeon, to lead him to the Scaffold, whither he is accompanied by two Priests, one habited like a Bishop, the other like a Cardinal. Another Singularity of their ancient Theatre is, that which they call *Vertoning* (the Representation); they let down the Curtain in the midst of an Act, and range the Actors upon the Stage, so that they represent, after the Manner of Pantomimes, some principal Action of the Subject. Thus in *Gysbrecht van Aemstel*, they lift up the Curtain, and on the Stage are represented the Soldiers of *Egmond*, Enemy to *Gysbrecht*, who sack a Convent of Nuns, where every Soldier has one, whom he uses at his Discretion: The Abbess is stretched out in the midst of the Theatre, holding on her Knees the venerable *Goswin*, the exiled Bishop of *Utrecht*, massacred in his Pontifical Robes, his Mitre on his Head, and the Cross in his Hand.



Hand. At the End of the Siege of *Leyden* there are eight or ten living Emblems to represent the Weight of the *Spanish* Tyranny, the Valour of the *Dutch*, Religion triumphant, Acts re-established, &c. There are upon the Stage upwards of three hundred Persons, and an Actress, with a Wand in her Hand, explains them to the Spectators, who appear astonished: We may say that really this makes a beautiful Show.

The *Dutch* Spectators, besides the Massacres and Blood, have adopted, and have a Taste for, the *Marvellous* and *Extraordinary*: For Example, they act a Tragedy, where we see a Princess who has before her on a Plate her Lover's Head cut off; she sets herself down to write, and addresses her Words to the Head, who answers her. In another Tragedy, *Circe* designing to destroy the Confident of *Ulysses*, with whom she was displeased, orders a Process to be begun against him: The Criminal is brought before the Court which *Circe* had constituted for that Purpose: The Lyon is the President, the Monkey the Register, the Wolf, the Fox, and other Animals are Counsellors, and the Bear is the Hangman. They condemn the Confident of *Ulysses*, and hang him immediately without letting him go off the Stage: After the Execution, all the Members of him that was hanged, fall Piece by Piece into a Well, which

which is beneath the Gallows. *Ulysses* comes upon the Stage and complains to *Circe*, who, touched at his Grief, makes him that was hanged come forth from the Well alive and entire as he was before. They are very curious about their Machines and their Flights. When a Man is to fly, a Rope is hung down with a Stirrup at the End of it; the Actor puts one Foot in it, takes hold of it with one Hand, and then comes down from the Height of the Theatre.

Their Theatre becomes every Day more exact, and they banish all these ancient Pieces, excepting some few, which are as it were consecrated by long Custom. For Example, the *Siege of Leyden* is acted every Year on the 3d of *October*, *Gysbrecht van Aemstel* on *Christmas-Eve*; and each of these Pieces is played every Year five or six times running, to satisfy the greedy Curiosity of Peasants, inferior Burghers, old People, Servants, and Children.

From the Year 1561, which is the Epocha of their most ancient Comedy, until the Year 1638, the Nation counts forty Poets. He who first wrote with any Regularity for the Theatre was *Peter Cornelius Hooft*, Son to a Burgo-Master of *Amsterdam*, a learned Man, distinguished by the Name which they give him of the *Dutch Tacitus*, Author of a History of the Republic, and of the History

story of *Henry IV*, which was liked so much at that Time, that *Lewis XIII.* ennobled him, and gave him the Order of *St. Michael*. *Hoofst* had Talents for Poetry, he was a Member of the Society of *Rhetoricians* at *Amsterdam*. His Historian *Brandt* remarks that he improved that Society very much; and giving himself wholly up to Poetry before he wrote his History, he composed many Pieces, very regular for that Time. We have of him four Tragedies and three Comedies. The first, which is *Achilles and Polyxena*, is dated in the Year 1620; and thus he preceded by above fifteen Years the famous *Vondel*, of whom I shall now speak.

*Vondel*, surnamed the *Dutch Virgil and Seneca*, began to write for the Theatre in 1638, when he gave a Tragi-Comedy, intitled *Pascha*. His Theatrical Pieces are printed in two Volumes 4to. which contain thirty Tragedies; the first Volume has sixteen on sacred Subjects, and the second fourteen prophane ones, five of which have been corrected since the Year 1700, according to the Taste of the modern Theatre. The *Palamede* of *Vondel* passes for a Master-piece: It is an allegorical Piece, which couches a Satire on the Stadtholdership of Prince *Maurice*, and a Panegyric on *Barneveldt*, whom that Prince brought to the Scaffold,

Scaffold, altho' it was to him he owed all his Dignities.

Before the Reign of *Lewis XIV.* we find in the *Dutch* Theatre very few foreign Pieces imitated, excepting some taken from the *Spanish*, and which they received from *Brabant*: But since they have approved of *Corneille*, *Racine*, and the other celebrated Tragedians, they have translated their good Performances with all the Energy the *Dutch* Tongue is capable of, insomuch that they say confidently in their Country, that they have many Pieces of these Authors as good as the Originals, and some that exceed them: For their Language, as they pretend, is infinitely more expressive of the *Serious and Tragic*, than the *French* Tongue is: They pretend that one *Dutch* Word has more Force in that kind of Writing, than a Period in *French*; but I cannot judge of this, being entirely ignorant of that Language. Their Theatrical Pieces are always in Verse, and they follow the same Rule they do in *France*; they seldom write in Blank Verse. The Tragedies are generally in five Acts, and sometimes in three. As for the Rhime, I am of Opinion that it is the Nature of their Language which causes them to follow Versification so much, for their Rhimes are excellent. Their Verse rhimes like the *Italian*, always by the two last Syllables: This makes



a Harmony so just and so sonorous, that all those who are able to taste the *Italian* Poetry assure us, that, for the same Reasons, they cannot help being affected with the *Dutch* Rhimes.

However, notwithstanding these Advantages of the Rhime in the *Dutch* Language, I imagine that there is an Inconvenience in it. Before I explain my Thought, I would call to mind the Criticism which a *French* Author made, *a propos*, on the *Italian* Language, because it appears to me to be of the same Nature with the Remark I have made on the *Dutch* Tongue. The *French* Critic advanced that the greatest Part of the *Italian* Words ended with an *a* or an *o*, and said that, that continual Monotony rendered the Language very defective. The *Italians* who answered him, made him sensible, that if he had been but in the least able to speak the *Italian* Language, he would not have advanced such an Observation; but that having judged of it only by the Eye, he easily fell into the Error \*. This probably may be my Case, notwithstanding all the Precautions I have taken. The *Dutch* Poets have

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\* The Marquis of Orfi, in his Letters upon *The Manner of Thinking well*, and Mr. Mauratori in his *Perfetta poesia*, furnish us with as many Instances and Examples of this kind as can be desired.

have imitated the *Alexandrian* Verse in all its Parts, and I believe that their Language ought not to follow the Quality of the masculine and feminine Rhimes of the *French* Poetry. It seems to me that the *Dutch* feminine Rhime is faulty in the Article of Monotony: It terminates always in the Syllable *en*, and that perpetual Sound appears to me very troublesome. I know very well that the Pronunciation can diversify, in some measure, the Sound of that Syllable *en*, according as it is preceeded by a long, or a short, or a double Vowel, &c. but this cannot persuade me that the Inconvenience of the Monotony does not present itself continually. I do not understand the *Dutch* Language; but after having judged of it by my Eyes, and by Reflection I was willing also to judge of it by my Ears: I caused a *Dutchman* to pronounce to me some Words chosen out of feminine Rhimes, and I perceived that the Syllable *en* sounded continually in my Ears, notwithstanding the different Sound that every Word bears; that it never changes its Sound, and that it is always pronounced. They assure me, that in familiar Discourse it is sometimes almost mute, or at least softened; but that on the Theatre, and in the Pulpit, they pronounce it always strong.

I make another Reflection: The *French*  
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have been obliged to establish two Rhimes which they have named masculine and feminine, by the Nature of their Language, the half of whose Words terminate in a mute *e*; and I conceive that the *Dutch* Tongue was necessitated to the same, having also half of its Words terminating in *en*. But I observe the Advantage which the *French* has over the *Dutch* Tongue: In the one we but very rarely perceive that the feminine Rhimes terminate in *e*; and in the other we hear plainly that they all terminate in *en*. In effect, *Image*, *Jalousie*, *Chimere*, *Sacrifice*, *Perfide*, *Adore*, *Colere*, &c. and an infinite Number of Words of *French* feminine Rhimes, do not appear to end in *e*, and each has a different Sound. But in the *Dutch* Tongue, these Words *Leden*, *Voren*, *Tirannen*, *Wonden*, *Gebroken*, *Zoonen*, *Barbaren*, and in all the rest of their feminine Rhimes, the Syllable *en* sounds continually, and consequently the Monotony is inevitable. I have had the Curiosity to examine, on this Head, the *Dutch* Tragedy of *The Death of the Prince of Orange*, which is one of the best of their Theatre: The first Act has 800 Lines, 400 of which are feminine Rhimes; of which there are 324 that terminate in the Syllable *en*; and twenty that have a different Termination; and this confirms to me, that the Disposition of their

Language



Language is not at all lucky, in regard to this Article, of the feminine Rhimes they have adopted; perhaps indeed they cannot dispose any otherwise, but they never fail to be a remarkable Inconvenience \*.

Their Theatre now becomes every Day more exact: They have banished all the ancient Pieces, and act none but new ones, which make their Theatre entirely of a *French* Taste. Generally they perform a Tragedy or a Comedy of five Acts, followed by a small Piece which they call *Klugtspel*. Many of these they have translated from *D'Ancourt* and *Le Grand*, and other *French* Authors; but those which are in the natural Taste of the Country, infinitely exceed the foreign Pieces; besides that, the Authors are ignorant of the Spirit of the *French* Performances, which renders these Translations very insipid: But they perform Wonders in

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\* The *Dutch* and *Germans* are the only Nations who have imitated the *French* in making Use of Rhime in Tragedy and Comedy. The *Italians* and the *English* have never put them into Rhime; and if the *Spaniards* have sometimes done it, they have put the Rhimes corresponding to one another at a considerable Distance, and by that Means avoided the disagreeable Monotony of the *Alexandrine* Verse. I don't think however, that they are to be followed as Models in that Particular.

From this Note of our Author's it is plain that there are a great many English Dramatic Performances, which never came to his Hands, and which he never heard of.



Tragedy, which they recite nobly and naturally, the *Dutch* being generally averse to the Tragic Declamation of the *French* Theatre, which they regard as a Rant foreign to Nature.

The Play-houses of *Amsterdam*, of the *Hague*, and of *Leyden*, have had good Authors †; but they have but few so good Actresses, as *Madam Benjamine*, &c. They say that they would yet have better Actors and Actresses, if they were paid as in *France*; for there are great Numbers who have the Gifts of the Theatre, Memory, Taste, Presence, and good Speech; but their ‡ best Performers have not above 600 Florins a Year; so that, not being able to live by the Theatre alone, they all have Trades. *Punt* is an excellent Engraver. *Duym* is a Book-seller, &c.. Besides this, their Players must be sober and modest, because being almost all Burgers and Burgers Wives, they would be ashamed to appear upon the Stage with an Actor whose Virtue was suspected: On this Account the Managers of their Theatres, who are eight Persons of Distinction, were obliged

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† *Van Sermes*, *Ryndorp*, *Noseman*, *Brinkhuys*, *Benjamine Koning*, *Jan Tambour*, *Vander Sluys*. *Bor*, *Boekhurst*, *Vander Ramp*, *Duym*, *Punt*, have distinguished themselves.

‡ *Benjamine Brinkhuys*, *Noseman*, *Rigo*, *Waechtendorp*, *Bor*, *Duym*, *Jordaan*, *Maze*.

obliged to dismiss their best Actress, because an Accident which had happened to her, hindered her Companions to perform along with her: However, some Time after she was readmitted.

Their Play-houses are a Demi-oval, of which, the Side of the Stage makes the small Diameter: Near to the Stage is the Orchestre, consisting at the most of two Bands of Musicians: Behind this, two Thirds of the Space form what they call *Bac*, which is a Pit with Benches covered with Cushions or Carpets: The other Third-part, which is about two or three Foot higher, is a Place where they stand up: There is, all round the Room, a Row of Boxes which are higher than the lowest Part of the Stage by five or six Feet. At *Amsterdam* there is a second Row of Boxes, in form of an Amphitheatre.

They pay Twenty-pence for the Pit, Thirty-pence for the Boxes, for the Standing-Places Six-pence, and for the Amphitheatre above (where there is one) Ten-pence. The Revenue of the Theatre, (Actors paid, and all Expences defray'd) is set aside for the Support of two Hospitals, which have sometimes from twenty to five and twenty thousand Florins a Year. In all the other Cities, the Performance is carried on with Tranquillity enough: As between the Acts they lower the

Curtain in order to snuff the Candles, the meaner Sort of People take that Opportunity to drink, taking Care to bring a Stock along with them; but at *Amsterdam*, where the People are more forward and impudent, the Amphitheatre, above the first Boxes, is very troublesome: They talk there very loud; they call to one another from one End to the other; they crack Nuts during the whole Performance; they are perpetually throwing Bottles up and down between Acts, infomuch that they make a terrible Noise, which is very disagreeable. If the Actors displease the Amphitheatre, they plague them; they call them Nick-names, and cry aloud to them to retire, or to hold their Peace, &c. Their Play-houses are well illuminated: Besides five or six Sconces which hang from the Middle down on the Edge of the Stage, there are generally between the Boxes Branched-Candlesticks with Lights in them. They boast extremely of the Theatre of *Amsterdam*, and it is current in these Parts, that it is one of the most beautiful in *Europe*; but this I can't affirm for Truth, because I never saw it: It is of great Extent both in Length and Breadth: Its Decorations are magnificent: There is a Gallery of the famous *Lairesse*, which is a Master-piece; and a Saloon of *Troost*, which is grand.

I must observe that their Taste for Poetry  
is

is not at all diminished, altho' the *Reden-Ryckers-Kamers* do not subsist any more: They have substituted in their room Poetical-Societies, and distinguished every one by a Device. They count in *Amsterdam* so many as thirty, the most ancient of which have for Devices, the one *In magnis voluisse sat est*; and the other, *Latet quoque utilitas*. These two Societies, from the Year 1680 to 1698, have produced twenty four Pieces. Another, which has for its Motto, *Nil volentibus arduum*, has given twenty six from the Year 1704 to 1717: That which has for its Device, *L' Application fait fleurir les Arts*, has produced twenty five Pieces from 1700 to 1718, insomuch that the Collection of the Theatrical Pieces of these Societies amounts to near two hundred.

The Catalogue of the Pieces of the *Dutch* Theatre printed in the Year 1727, contains two hundred sixty eight Authors, thirty Societies, and four hundred ninety eight Tragedies, three hundred seventy one Comedies, seventy six Tragi-Comedies, twenty three Pastorals, two hundred seventy Farces, and eight Operas, which make in all one thousand two hundred forty six Theatrical Pieces. As for Habits, they have followed the Taste of the Times: At present they use the same they do at *Paris*, excepting this, that their *Roman* Habits are with Helmets, which are



y<sup>et</sup> better than Hats: The Oriental Pieces are performed in a long Dress, like the *Turkish*; the rest in Dresses according to the Fashion: The whole is magnificent, and the *Roman* Habits are embroidered curiously: Their Warehouse furnishes all.

The principal Actors are at present Mr. *Duym*, whom they call their *Baron*, and *Punt*, their *Quinault*. Madams *Maze* and *Bruyn*, and some young People who form themselves on the Instructions of the old *Bor*, who will become, as they hope, excellent Actors.





T H E  
GERMAN THEATRE.



ALL the Capital Cities of *Europe* have applied themselves earnestly to revive Shows. In effect, as soon as Tragedy and Comedy appeared since the Time of the *Romans*, we may observe, that the several Nations took but little Time after one another, in re-establishing their Theatres. In Truth, the *German* Theatre has been the latest; and for this Reason it is, that it is easier to trace its Origin and Progress, than of the others.

Ancient *Germany* has its *Bards*, who in Quality of Poets composed and sung the Elogies of their Heroes. Hence it is that the Word *Bar* comes, which signifies a *Song*. Since *Charlemagne*, we have seen succeed to these *Bards* another kind of Poets, called *Master-Langer*, that is to say *Master-Singers*,  
who

who may be six hundred Years standing. They bring all sort of Proofs to evince that they were famous even in the Days of *Otho* the Great, who had given them considerable Privileges, confirmed by his Successors, especially *Maximilian I.* Different Societies and Clubs of these *Master-Singers* were formed in the principal Cities of *Germany*; at *Mentz*, *Straßbourg*, *Nurembourg*, and *Augsbourg*. They had a Right to write Poetry at Tournaments, public Meetings, and other solemn Ceremonies. That at *Straßbourg* is actually subsisting yet, and enjoys certain Revenues, established many Ages ago in favour of this Company; which is composed of Tradesmen, Workmen, Taylors, Shoemakers, Weavers, Millers, &c. who perform in a conspicuous Place, or a common Hall of Tradesmen, publickly at certain Times in the Year, having their old and their chief Men, who are Judges of the Versification and Song, and who distribute the instituted Prize, according to their Rules and Customs; these ignorant Workmen, who have no Notion of Poetry, nor of the Rules of Music, give besides sometimes an Entertainment to amuse the By-standers.

It is from these *Singers* that we must draw the Origin of the *German Theatre*; but they did not apply to this till late, giving themselves up generally to compose Verses on Subjects



jects taken from sacred and prophane History, which they recite in their public Room. The *Royal Song* of the *French*, under the Reign of *Charles* about the Year 1370, of which we have spoken in its proper Place, has all the Appearance of being the same thing. I would not undertake to search and determine which Nation first sung Verses on Passages of History; any learned Man, who is curious about it, may decide it; but as for me, I neglect that Search, as a Thing which is not at all necessary to my Subject.

Before the fifteenth Age, we find no Signs of Shows represented by these *German Singers*. About the Middle of the sixteenth Age they were frequent, especially at *Nuremburgh*, where a Shoemaker named *Haanffachs*, who was not without a Genius, had composed many *German Dramatic Pieces*, of which there are several Volumes in Folio and Quarto, without reckoning the Manuscripts which are yet extant in great Number. The Author performed them himself in public Houses, where these Tradesmen had their common Meetings. These first Dramatic Pieces were taken mostly from sacred History, like those which they had seen at that Time in *France*, where they had appeared an Age before.

It seems that they acted them *gratis*, or at least their Recompence was but trifling:  
They



They also have made them on purpose, to amuse or instruct their Princes. *Massenius* tells us, that they had one which hinted at the Affairs of Religion in these Times, and that this was to shew to *Charles V.* the Faults which he had committed. Some Bodies of Tradesmen in the great Towns of *Germany* making sometimes solemn Processions, had a Custom, from Time immemorial, to act Comedies and Farces. By degrees was introduced also into public Schools the Custom of Shows, but generally in the *Latin* Tongue. You will find at the End of my Book a small Catalogue of certain *German* Theatrical Pieces, composed originally in that Language; for they have a great many *French* ones, and many ancient *Latin* ones, which have been translated into *German* by different Authors at different Times.

From the Year 1516 to 1628 or 30, their sacred and profane Tragedies were but wretched; and during that Time the insipid Comedies of *Hannssachs*, and the other *Master-Singers*, who wrote in his Manner, possessed the *German* Theatre. In the Year 1626 a Company of *Dutch* Players went to *Hamburgh*, and the *German* Theatre altered its Manner, by borrowing from them the Models of a better Drama both in Tragedy and Comedy. About the Year 1627 or 28, a Company of Players was formed, which  
gave

gave Rise to many others ; and these writing Plays in the Taste of the *Dutch*, by degrees destroyed the Theatre of the *Master-Singers*, by turning them into Burlesque and Ridicule. Towards the Year 1630, or at most 35, the *German Theatre* was in its Perfection ; and then their Poets wrote regular Tragedies and Comedies in a correct Versification, as I shall shew, after I have given the Reader a general Notion of this Theatre.

The Players however still retained their *Dutch* Taste of the Drama, and intermixt true Tragedy with their ordinary Plays, which in the main were as wretched as the *Drama* of the *Singers*. Since the Year 1680, the *German* Players being instructed by the *Italian* Companies which were invited to *German* Courts, attempted to play Extempore Comedies ; these *Italians* gave them the Ground-plat, and these were pirated in Writing during the Representation.

At present the *German* Drama is composed of good Tragedies and Comedies ; of Plays written in the first Taste of the *Dutch* ; of great Numbers translated ; and of the *Italian* Comedies adapted to their Idiom, and played *extempore*.

We must observe that the *Germans* are the only People in *Europe* who, in Imitation of the *Italians*, have attempted to act *extempore* : I don't know however if they  
ought

ought to boast much of their Success; for tho' their Theatre were perfect, this Method of *extempore* is enough to debauch and ruin it. The true *Italian* Drama, wrote and played in Academies about the Year 1500, was a Reformation of the Hireling Comedy which many Ages before was played *extempore*, as we have seen above. But the *Germans* having begun their Drama by written, tho' wretched, Tragedies and Comedies, and their Theatre being afterwards polished into a better Taste, there is great Reason to fear that the *extempore* Manner, which has been since introduced, may occasion the entire Ruin of the *German* Theatre.

The first Company that was formed in *Germany* after the Year 1626, was composed of young Students of good Families, and their Chief was one *Charles Paul*, the Son of a Lieutenant-Colonel. These were soon followed by others, who, like them, chose their Actors from among the Students of the best Education and Families. The Head of the fourth Company, which was formed during the Infancy of their Theatre, was *John Welten*, a Professor of Philosophy, and Son to the Professor of Divinity in the University of *Jena* in *Saxony*. This able Player chose his Company from among the Flower of the noble Scholars of *Jena* and *Leipsic* in *Saxony*. He wrote Tragedies of his own Invention.

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The Elector of *Saxony* took them all into his Service, where they ended their Days in great Esteem. The other Companies which succeeded, kept up the great Reputation of their Predecessors; some of them by their Talents and Birth have been honoured with the Laurel, and declared Poets-Laureat by the Emperor; some of them, having left the Stage, attained to great Dignities in the Church, and to other Posts of Power and Profit, which they could not have filled, had there not met in their Persons the highest Quality with the most distinguished Capacity. Some of these Gentlemen still live in great Employments, tho' it may not be decent to name them, because in our Days the Profession of a Player in all Countries is a Blemish upon his natural Accomplishments.

The *German* Tragedies and Comedies, which originally were no other than Imitations of the *Dutch*, have to this Day preserved the Gloominess of their original Models. I shall not mention the Punishments nor the Torments of Martyrs, nor the Racks of *Russians*; it is enough to say that they never fail to bring them all upon the Stage. In their Tragedies are commonly heard horrible Voices; Spectres and Phantoms are seen with bloody Swords in their Hands, or sticking in their Breasts, together with black flaming



ing Torches, Tombs, and every Object that can most effectually excite Terror.

As I observed before, about a hundred Years ago, they attempted first to chastise and reform their Theatre upon the Models of Antiquity; to observe Rules, to write in a correct Stile, elegant and sublime at the same time, to polish their Rhimes and Numbers, so as to give their Plays their justest Perfection and truest Beauty. The *Silesians* had the Honour to be the first who cultivated this barren Spot. *John Opitz*, *Andrew Gryphius*, and *Gasper de Lobenstein*, are the three most able *German* Poets who have given the greatest Beauty both to the Poetry and Stage of their Country. The first of these has wrote a *German* Prosody, where he lays down for his Countrymen excellent Rules for the Drama. The Dramatic Compositions of these Authors, which are almost all Tragedies, especially *Gryphius* who is the *Corneille* of *Germany*, have merited the Esteem of the Public, and their Reputation continues to this Day. The *Saxons* have only followed or imitated these with regard either to *Taste*, Purity, or Elegance of Stile, or the Force of Expression. No *German* Poet since the Time of *Gryphius* has presumed to dispute with him the first Place in Tragedy. He was likewise Author of some very pretty diverting Farces, which contained a  
very

very fine and agreeable Ridicule upon the Comedies that had till then been played by the Singers whom we have already mentioned, and by the Strollers of those Days.

At present they have no Poets who attempt to give the Public any original Compositions in their manner; they having adopted the Dramatic Compositions of *foreign* Theatres to their own. Some time since, they began to translate from the *French* Theatre, then from the *Spanish*, the *Italian*, the *English*, &c. without however leaving out their old *Pieces*, which still are the Ground-work of their Drama, tho' very wretched Stuff. If any *Pieces* in a quite new Manner appeared, whether Translations or Imitations, they for the most part never sold one Impression; the Reason of this is singular and worthy to be accounted for.

In all their Companies there are Poets who write Plays. If any Poet who is *foreign* to their Profession shall offer them a Play, he expects no Copy-Money, nor any Reward, but makes a Present of it to some Actor or Actress; and the Proprietor enjoys all the Profits of the Author, or a certain Sum which is agreed to be paid by the Company every time it is acted, tho' it run for an Age; and thus a Play is as it were an Estate entailed, which goes by Descent in a Family. It is the same with the *Pieces* of their *Acting*

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Authors:

Authors: But as soon as one of their Pieces appears in Print, the Company immediately make themselves Masters of it, and give no future Consideration to the Player, who is either Proprietor or Author. For this Reason most of their new Pieces are only known by their being acted, and never appear in Print. Interest prevents the Acting Authors or Proprietors from relishing the Benefit which the Public must receive from seeing these Performances in Print, since it must thereby be enabled to judge of the Progress or Declension of their Stage, which would not fail to give Rise to Dissertations and Criticisms always productive of good Effects, either by confirming the Public in their Taste when good, or exposing it when bad.

I am sensible that on the other hand a great many People, especially Players, approve of this Method, because they know that as soon as a Piece is in Print their Houses grow very thin, and the Curiosity of the Public abates by reading it. When the Pieces are not printed, they still have Novelty to recommend them; and after a ten Years Intermission of representing them, the Curiosity of the Public will make as crowded a House, as on the first Night of their Representation. Could the Poetical Inheritance at *Paris* be brought under the like Regulation, it would be of vast Advantage to the Players, especially

cially as the Authors are to have no Consideration whatsoever; but few Poets write for bare Glory, and most of them want to make a Penny of their Works. For my own Part I own that I am a great Stickler for an Author's being paid, for sometimes the Sweets of the Gain engage Persons who excel in the Drama, to draw their Pens in that Species of Writing, who perhaps otherwise never would have dreamed of commencing Authors. If this Practice of rewarding Authors was introduced by Players, the State is very much obliged to them, for it has produced many illustrious Authors who have done Honour to the *French* Nation.

With regard to the Representation of Holy Mysteries upon the Stage, it is not above thirty Years since the Passion of our Lord was represented at *Vienna* in *Austria*, but prohibited afterwards by the Predecessor of the present Archbishop on account of the Indecencies and Profaneness introduced by the Actors in the Representation. In the Exhibition of this Piece, which consisted of five Acts, we saw the Terrestrial Paradise, the Creation of *Adam* and *Eve*, their Fall, the Death of *Abel*, *Moses* in the Desert, the Travels of *Mary*, *Joseph*, and the Child *Jesus* into *Ægypt*, which last, by the bye, is represented in the Habit of a full-grown Lad, and is fed with Spoon-meat upon the Stage.



We then see the Disputation of *Christ* with the Elders in the Temple ; his Prayer in the Garden ; his Seizing ; all his Passion ; his Death upon the Cross, and his Burial, which closes the Representation. Other Representations of the Passion are more agreeable to the Rules of Good-Sense ; but this is most frequently exhibited, it being, by reason of its singular Decorations, the favourite Entertainment of the Public.

At *Vienna*, and all the Courts of the *German* Princes, as well as the principal Cities of the Empire, their Halls are magnificent, built by *Italian* Architects, and embellished by *Italian* Painters ; as to the Expences of seeing a Play, they are pretty much upon the same Footing as in *France*.

At *Hamburg* there is an Opera where they sing in the *Italian* Manner, which is generally followed and practised all over *Germany* : The Recitative is in their own Language, but the *Airs* generally in the *Italian* : They have three different Operas in one Week. I don't know if the Musicians in the Opera at *Hamburg* are upon the same Regulations they were forty Years ago ; but I am assured that they are all Tradesmen or Handicrafts ; and your Shoemaker was often the first Performer on the Stage ; and you might have bought Confections and Fruits from the same Girls whom the Night before  
you

you saw in the Character of *Armida* or *Semiramis*. But I am persuaded, that in Imitation of the other People of *Europe* they have exalted this Entertainment.

There are six *German* Companies of Comedians, whereof *Sweden* has one, *Livonia* another, and the rest stroll about as they please from Town to Town. Most of the *German* Courts have *French* Companies, sometimes *Italian*, whom they hire to reside with them; and they have likewise Operas which cost them prodigious Sums. At *Vien*na in *Austria* there is every Year an Opera, because all the Emperor's Band of Music are *Italians*; whence we may readily infer, that the *German* Company of Players are not very well received over that Country.

In reflecting upon the Manners of all the Theatres we have as yet described, we may I believe reasonably presume, that all of them, more or less, fall short of that Severity of Manners and Diction which Men of Virtue require, and that there is great room for a Reformation. The Cities of *Rome* and *Paris* have given very strong Proofs of the Desire which their Governments have to put their Stages on a better Footing in this respect.

*Lewis XIV.* ordered that every new Play before it was acted should be approved and signed by the Lieutenant-General of the Police. This is a very wise Institution, and

seems calculated to put it out of the Power of any Poet to exhibit to the Public any thing that is lewd or scandalous, in which Case tho' a Prohibition might be put upon it from appearing ever after, and the Impression might be stifled, yet still that could not prevent Modesty's receiving some Shock by the first Representation. But by a severe Examination of Dramatic Performances, Religion, Morals, and Politics are always safe.

At *Rome* the same End is sought after by quite different Means. The *Italian* Theatre is no longer in the Taste of their Ancestors; the Extempore Comedy remains Mistress in the Field, which their Dramatic Poets in the Year 1500 had seized upon, by introducing the Method of acting Tragedies and Comedies written in Verse and Prose. The *Italian* Theatre therefore depends upon ancient and modern Sketches which are impossible to be criticised; for the most exact and the chastest Outlines may produce a very scandalous Comedy, especially if the masqued Actors are not People of Virtue. The Liberty of speaking whatever comes uppermost may sometimes seduce the most cautious Players; Criticism would therefore be useless; for that Reason perhaps at *Rome* these Pieces pass no Examination: They therefore go another way to work. They have taken Care to put a kind of Interdict upon Women's going to the

the Play-house, as being most liable to be corrupted; and under the Pontificate of *Innocent XI.* they were prohibited both the Comedy and the Opera.

The Women, even supposing them to be wise, might be a Nuisance upon the Stage. This Inconveniency is prevented so far as regards the City of *Rome*; but it can't be said that this Reformation alone has extended to all the Stages in *Italy*. I don't know but the different Methods of *Rome* and *Paris* joined together, might have the designed Effect.



*An Extract from the GERMAN.*

**B**EFORE I proceed to the Extract I propose, I must explain my Motives of giving it. A *German* Tragedy happened to fall into my Hands with a long Preface, and at the End was annex'd a *Critique*, with an Answer. Tho' I don't understand that Language, yet in running this Performance over with my Eye, I could perceive the Names of a great many *French* Authors mentioned, and therefore was curious to know what was the Author's Meaning. I therefore put the Tragedy into the Hands of a Person who made an Extract from it, and I believed it would be no disagreeable Entertainment to



the Public to communicate to it what the Author has said in this Preface ; for besides that it gives us an excellent and indisputable Notion of their Stage, I don't think his Ideas in Writing at all contemptible. His Preface, his Criticisms, and his Answers to them, will enable us to judge of the Manner of Thinking which Men of Learning in *Germany* entertain of the Stage, and may perhaps disabuse a great Number of People, who think that in that Country they have neither the Practice, the Knowledge, or a Taste of Dramatic Poetry.



## E X T R A C T.

*The Death of CATO, by JOHN CHRISTOPHER GOTTSEHED, a Tragedy, with the Sentiments of Mr. de Fenelon on Tragedy; to which are added a Critique, and an Answer; the Second Edition, printed at Leipzig in the Year 1735.*

### The P R E F A C E.

**I** N T E N D to publish a Tragedy in Verse, when such Pieces after being forgot for more than thirty Years, have just renewed

newed their Appearance upon our Theatre. Three Years ago, in my *Treatise upon Criticism*, I did my best to encourage our Nation to cultivate Dramatic Poetry, but I would not venture upon an Attempt of that kind myself, for fear of preventing others by my Example. I waited with Impatience to see whether any of our Poets would undertake this Task for the Honour of *Germany*. It must be owned that we don't want great Geniuses, who seem to have a Talent for Dramatic Poetry, provided they knew its Rules, with the Faults and the Beauties of the *German* Theatre, and those of *France*, *England*, and *Italy*.

Before I acquaint the Reader with my Motive for publishing this Tragedy, it will be necessary to inform him, what gave me so strong a Bent to the Drama, and prevailed with me to write in that way.

Fifteen or sixteen Years ago, I read one of the Tragedies of *Lohenstein*\*, which gave me a very odd Notion of Tragedy. Tho' I heard that Poet highly extolled by People of Taste, I could never relish the Beauties of his Works, but durst not frankly declare my Sentiments. I was equally distasted with *The Antigona of Sophocles*, translated into the  
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\* This Poet has wrote five Tragedies. See the Catalogue at the End.

*German* Language by *Opitz*†; and tho' I highly relished the other Productions of that Father of our Poetry, yet I could not endure the Harshness of this Translation, which likewise to me appeared a little forced and unnatural. Thus I remained in a kind of Indifference, or even Ignorance, with regard to the Drama, till the Works of *Boileau* fell into my Hands. The Satire addressed to *Moliere*, and the Encomiums and Criticisms upon Dramatic Works, with which it is interspersed, excited my Curiosity to know the rest of that Author's Pieces. I read the Works of *Moliere*, which gave me a strong Inclination to see some Tragedy or Comedy acted. In the Year 1724, I found at *Leipsic* the privileged Company of Comedians belonging to the Court of *Saxony*, who come up thither only in the Time of the Fair. Here I had an Opportunity of satisfying my Curiosity; I saw every Play, but I soon perceived that little Regularity was observed on that Theatre; for they represented great Actions of Kings and Affairs of State intermingled with the Tricks of *Harlequin*, romantic Adventures, Farces, and Buffooneries. The only good Piece acted there, was *The Combat of Honour and Love*; or, *Roderigue and Chimene*, translated into blank Verse.

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† *Opitz* has wrote four Tragedies.

Verse. It is easy to conceive that this Piece not only pleased me more than the other Plays, but likewise made me sensible of the vast Difference between a regular Tragedy, and the Exhibition of that fantastical Medley I have just now mentioned.

I became acquainted with the then Master of the Company. I talked to him of a better Order upon his Theatre. I asked him especially why he did not act the Tragedies of *Griphius*, as also his *Horribilicribrifax* \*. He answered me, that he had formerly play'd the first of his Tragedies, but that at present such Pieces did not take, because they were too serious, and had no comical Characters in them. I advised him to try a new Piece in Verse, and promised to write it myself. Thus, tho' entirely ignorant of the Rules, nay, tho' I knew not so much as whether there were any Rules to be observed in Performances of this Nature, I translated the *Endymion* of *Fontenelle*, which I caused to be printed with the Addition of some comical Scenes that made up a kind of Interlude, entirely independent of the principal Action. By good Fortune I did not then venture to shew my Translation, for *Endymion* was more suited to the Nature of an Opera †, than of a Comedy.

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\* See the small Catalogue at the End.

† *Endymion* itself is in reality an Opera.



In these Days, the bad Pieces which I saw acted, occasioned me to make several Reflections; and tho' I was ignorant of the Rules, I did not find in them that easy Turn, and strict Imitation of Nature, which is the peculiar Beauty, and the chief Perfection of Dramatic Performances; I became solicitous and uneasy, to know the Rules of the Drama, for I could not imagine that a Piece of Poetry, so grand and august, could subsist without Rules, since I observed that all the other kinds of Poetry had stated ones peculiar to themselves. But I have met with none of them in our Writers, except in *Rothen's Description of German Poetry*, printed at *Leipsic*, in the Year 1688.

*Menantes*, in his *Dramatic Poetry*, gives but little Insight and imperfect Directions with regard to the *Operas*. Tho' *Rothen's* Thoughts upon this Subject are none of the worst, yet, instead of giving me full Satisfaction, he only opened my Eyes to a new Light, by the Encomiums he bestowed upon *Aristotle's Art of Poetry*. By means of these uncommon Applauses given it by this Writer, my Curiosity led me to read it, which I did for the first time, in Mr. *Dacier's French Translation*. *Causabon on the Satyr of the Greeks*, *Rappolts Aristotle's Art of Poetry*, *Heinsius de Tragediæ Constitutione*, *The Abbot Aubignac's Practice of the Theatre*, and other  
Writers

Writers amongst the Moderns, gave me all the Satisfaction I could wish for. My reading the Dramas of *Corneille*, *Racine*, *Moliere*, *La Mothe Danchet*, and *Voltaire*, together with their *Prefaces*, and the critical Dissertations subjoined, contributed not a little to my Information. But the Authors to whom I was more obliged than to all the rest were *Father Brumoy*, in his *Theatre of the Greeks*, and *Riccoboni* in his *Italian Theatre*.

The more I knew of the Regulations of foreign Theatres, the more I was disgusted at the Disorder and Confusion of the *German* Stage; but it happened that the Comedians of the Court of *Dresden* changed their Master, whose Successor, as well as his Wife, (who has a fine Genius for the Stage, and equals the most accomplished Actresses either of *France* or *England*) had a strong Inclination to abolish the wild Confusion which had till then debased our Theatre, and to put the *German* Stage on the same Footing with that of the *French*. Long before this, while he was at the Court of *Brunswick*, Attempts had been made to translate the best *French* Tragedies into *German* Verse, and Copies of a great many of them sent to him for effectuating the same Purpose. And tho' they begun with the *Regulus of Pradon*, who was none of the best Writers of *French* Tragedy, and translated very harshly by *Bressand*, a  
Poet

Poet residing at the Court of that Prince, yet it had such a Run that they were thereby encouraged to act *Brutus* and *Alexander*, translated by the same Hand. Some Time after *the Cid of Corneille* appeared, translated by a better Hand, and met with greater Applauses than any of the Pieces formerly played.

That I might contribute all I could to the Reformation of our Theatre, I proposed to act *Cinna*, translated by a Person of Distinction, a Member of the Counsel of *Nuremberg*. This Masterpiece of *Corneille* is in the Collection entitled *Vesta and Flora*, and met with the Success it deserved. At last I myself translated *the Iphigenia of Racine*; and two of my Friends translated the second Part of the *Cid*, called the *Mourning, or Mourning Year of Chimene*, and *Racine's Bernice*, which were all three acted with Applause; thus we had even at that Time eight regular Tragedies acted upon our Theatre.

After having given this short Account of the Rise to a Reformation on our Theatre, it is necessary I should speak of my own *Cato*, and give a particular Account of its Nature and Conduct.

*Cato of Utica*, has in all Ages of the World been looked upon as the Pattern of Stoical Resolution, as a thorough Patriot, and a true Republican. Poets and Orators, Historians

storians and Philosophers, have celebrated him in their Works; and even under the Despotic Government of the *Roman* Emperors who succeeded *Cæsar*, the greatest Men praised his Zeal and Warmth in defending the Republic. *Virgil* and *Horace*, under the Reign of *Augustus*, *Lucan* and *Seneca*, under that of *Claudius* and *Nero*, have sung his Praises. The Poet *Maternus* (as we see by that ancient Dialogue of the Orators upon the Cause of the Decay of Eloquence) wrote a Tragedy on *Cato*; and that Poet in all probability expressed his Aversion to Monarchy in Terms so full of Strength and Force, that his Friends thought the Piece not only too sarcastical, but even dangerous; a Circumstance which gives us sufficient Light with regard to the Original of that Poem.

*Cato* killed himself in *Utica*, and this Catastrophe has rendered the Action a fit Subject for a Tragedy; it is then no Wonder that the Poets of all Nations have made Choice of it for that Purpose.

In the Year 1712 Mr. *Addison*, an *English* Poet, published his *Cato*; it is impossible to conceive how highly this Piece was valued by the *English*, and perhaps their Love of Liberty contributed not a little to its Success. It is however certain that this Tragedy contains so many real Beauties, that it must please not only the *English*, but all  
other



other Spectators: In it the Characters and Manners are strictly preserved, and the Thoughts are suited to the different Turn and Genius of the Personages introduced. *Cato* is represented as a thorough Republican: But this Tragedy having already met with sufficient Applause on the Continent, especially in a Translation of it into *French* Prose, needs no Encomiums from me.

Soon after Mr. *Deschamps* published his *Cato*, which was printed at the *Hague* in the Year 1715. I don't believe that that Poet knew any thing of Mr. *Addison's* Tragedy, for the two do not resemble one another in their Conduct; the Table, the Personages, and the Incidents are quite different. And in the *English Cato* even Facts and Incidents are handled in a quite different Manner. The Character of *Cato* is indeed the same in both, and perfectly, equally, and well sustained; excepting when he is killed, and thro' all the fifth Act, for as I shall prove, the *English Cato* has something excellent in this Circumstance to balance the Merit of the *French*, which indeed is preferable in Point of Regularity.

If the Subject of *Sophonisba* has been handled by the *Italians*, the *French*, the *English*, and the *Germans*, it is not surprizing if that of *Cato* has had the same Fate; but I am sorry that it falls to my Weakness to undertake

undertake this Subject in the *German Language*. But conscious of my Inability to plan out the Action of a Fable, I have made Use of the two Originals just now mentioned, so that one may say of me what on another Occasion was said of *Terence*.

*Quæ convenere in Andriam ex Perinthia,  
Fatetur transfulisse, atq; Usum pro suis.*

Who confessed, “ That he took from *Perinthia*, and used as his own, such Things as best suited his Purpose in composing his *Andria*.”

My Imitation in this Particular is still farther authorized by the Example of another Poet :

*Habet Bonorum exemplum; quo exemplo sibi  
Licere id facere, quod illi fecerunt putat.*

Who thought, “ when he had the Example of good Authors to imitate, he might warrantably do what they on the like Occasions did.”

But without having recourse to the Example of *Terence*, who has borrowed whole Plays from *Menander*, with but a few Alterations or Additions of his own, I may justify myself by the Example of the best Writers

Q

of

of *French* Tragedy, who have imitated, translated, or altered *Sophocles* and *Euripides*.

I was at first advised, literally to translate *Addison's Cato*; but as I was resolved to stick to the Rules of the Drama, I found he fell far short in Regularity to the *French* Tragedy. The *English* are indeed great Masters both of Thought and Expression; they know wonderfully well how to sustain a Character, and enter surprisingly into the Heart of Man; but as to the Conduct of the Fable, they are very careless, as appears from all their Dramatic Compositions; and it would have given me great Pain had the *German* Stage been always liable to the Reproach of being irregular. This prevailed with me to alter my first Purpose, and write a *Cato* different from that of Mr. *Addison's*.

It would be useless for me to prove that the Tragedy of Mr. *Deschamps* is exactly according to the Rules of *Aristotle*. This sufficiently appears from the Criticism annexed to it, and confirms me in the Defects of the *English Cato*. In reality Mr. *Addison* joined three Actions in one, tho' each of them was entirely distinct from the other, independent of the main Plot, and often serving to make the Spectators lose Sight of it. The Action is as follows: *Cato* with his Party, which is not very numerous, is blocked up in *Utica*. *Cæsar* offers him Terms, which he refuses;  
upon

upon which *Cæsar* orders his Troops to advance, but *Cato* finding himself too weak to make Head against him, runs himself thro' the Body with his Sword. Mr. *Addison*, in order to extend this Action, has inserted two Episodes, or rather two Plots, quite foreign to the main Action. *Portius* and *Marcus*, the two Sons of *Cato*, are in Love with *Lucia*, the Daughter of a Roman Senator. *Portius*, whom his Brother makes his Confident, acts like a wise Youth, and conceals his own Passion: *Marcus* dies, and his Brother wins *Lucia*. On the other hand *Juba* falls in Love with *Marcia*, the Daughter of *Cato*, but meets with a Rival in the Person of *Sempronius*, a Roman Senator, who, disguised like a *Numidian* that he might carry off *Marcia*, is surprized and killed by that Prince who gains his Mistress.

These two Episodes are quite foreign to the principal Plot, and, in reality, destroy the Principle of the Unity of Action. Besides the Improbability in the Hurry and Confusion then at *Utica*, so much Time should have been spent in Intrigues of Gallantry, the Disguise of *Sempronius* to me seems too low and trivial for Tragedy. Even *Cato* in the first Act, to me does not sustain a proper Grandeur, nor is so great as when he appeases the Tumult, and bewails the Death of his Son. All the rest of the Play is quite fo-



reign to the main Action. In the *English* Tragedy the Scenes are very ill connected together; the Actors go and come without any apparent Reason; sometimes the Stage is quite empty; and the Entrances and Exits are equally defective, which never happens in the *French* Drama. In short, I did not think it very much in Character, that when *Cato* was dying, he should trouble himself so much about the two Marriages. The Moderns have made it an indispensable Duty, and as it were a Rule, to finish all Dramatic Representations by a Marriage, which has long given me great Disgust. The Ancients did it very rarely, and I wanted to try if a Tragedy could succeed without a Marriage, an Attempt in which I hope I have not been unsuccessful.

If I am asked why I have not entirely translated the *French Cato*, I answer, It was because the Plot in the Beginning was laid down with Good-Sense and Probability; and *Cato* is there represented as great, as in the last Act his Character to me appears weak and languishing; the Death of that great Man being not so much in the Character of a Philosopher as a Bravaoe. A Mutiny is raised in *Utica*, where *Cæsar* then was; his Army, who lay without the City being uneasy about the Safety of their General, furiously run into it, and kill all the Inhabitants.

bitants. Upon this *Cato* resolves to kill himself; but alas the Matter is over-done! and I can't allow myself to think that any one can approve of such a Deviation from historical Truth, and altering so much the Character of *Cato*, which was that of a Philosopher.

Besides, *Cato* is said to have had no Sons; but the Speech which the *English* Poet puts into his Mouth, when he sees one of his Sons dead, and inspires the other with a Hatred at Tyranny, appears to me too sublime not to merit a Place in my Tragedy. I have therefore preserved the Character of *Porcius*, tho' I have dressed it up in a quite different Light from what it appears in the two foreign Tragedies. I have not brought *Marcus* on the Stage till after his Death, that he may be viewed by *Cato* as the *French* Poet had done before me. This I could not dispense with, since I had struck out the *English* Characters of *Sempronius* and *Syphax*. As for the last Act of Mr. *Addison*, I have preserved it almost entire, having only changed the Persons, and cut off the Marriages of *Porcius* and of *Juba*. I have likewise put another Speech in *Cato's* Mouth before his Death, which I took from Mr. *Deschamps*.

It is likewise evident that the Marriage of *Arsene* with *Pharnaces* is only intended, and not actually celebrated: Mr. *Deschamps* in

his Preface has sufficiently justified himself in this Point. To tell the Truth, the Death of *Cato* is an Historical Fact which does not furnish sufficient Matter for a Tragic Action, without the Help of some Episode, and this one, in my Opinion, is very properly connected with the principal Action; for by Means of it, one has an Opportunity of comparing the Vices of one with the Virtues of another, a Thing as necessary for representing Virtue in her most amiable Colours, as Shades in Painting are for heightening the Effects of the Lights.

The same is the Case with regard to *Cæsar*. He did not really enter into *Utica*, as the Poet only supposes him to have done, and thereby he has an Opportunity of drawing the Parallel betwixt these two *Roman* Heroes. By comparing their two Characters, one is enabled to distinguish false from true Grandeur, and to see that Vice, when prosperous, may sometimes assume the Appearances of Virtue. The Conversation between *Cato* and *Cæsar* have not a little contributed to the Preference I have given the *French* to the *English* Poet in this Particular.

*Cato* was a Hero whose Character was suited to Tragedy, and comes within the Definition of *Aristotle*: His Virtue was great, yet not complete, or unstained with some small Mixture of Vice; for his Love of  
Liberty

Liberty degenerates into a confirmed Obstinacy; his Death is bewailed, and his Rashness condemned.

Tho' my *Cato* had a great Run when acted, and read very well, yet I must refer myself to the learned Readers, to whom, if it is agreeable, I flatter myself, that I have not spoilt what is good either in the *French* or in the *English* Performance; for I frankly acknowledge, that all the Beauties of my *Cato* are drawn from *Addison* and *Deschamps*, and all its Blemishes are to be ascribed to myself and my little Practice in Dramatic Writings.



*Extract of the* TRAGEDY, called  
*DYING CATO.*

*Dramatis Personæ.*

CATO.

ARSENE, or PORCIA.

PHENICE, her Attendant.

PHOCAS, a Friend of CATO.

PHARNACES King of Pontus.

FELIX, his Confident.

CÆSAR.

DOMITIUS, his Confident.

ARTABAN.

*Attendants of CATO.*

*Attendants of CÆSAR.*





*The Scene of Action is a Hall in the Castle of Utica.*

*The Action commences about 12 o'Clock, and ends about Sun-set.*

## ACT I. SCENE I.

*Arsene and Phenice.*

*Arsene* comes to wait on *Cato*, from whom she hopes Comfort and Relief in her Misfortunes, and Shelter from the Calamities which yet threaten her. She talks of the common Report of the Death of her Father *Arsaces*, King of the *Parthians*, and of the Arrival of *Pharnaces*, King of *Pontus*; and she is afraid of being more misfortunate than ever. *Phenice* asks her if she would ever accept of *Pharnaces* for her Husband. *Arsene* declares to her, that that would never happen; and opening her Love to her, tells her, that she could now speak as a Queen, her Father being dead. She bids her call to Mind that *Roman* whom *Cæsar* sent to her Father to gain him over to his Interests. *Phenice* runs out in his Praises; and *Arsene* confesses that she has been in Love with him since the first Moment she saw him. *Phenice* asks her his Name. *Arsene* replies, She does not know it; and seeing *Cato* approach, she praises him,

SCENE

S C E N E II.

To Them, *Cato*.

*Cato* condoles with *Arsene*, and confirms the News of her Father's Death. He asks her if, now that the *Parthians* had proclaimed her Queen, she would continue that Alliance and Fidelity which her Father had sworn to him; this *Arsene* promises to do, only asks the Favour that he would not protect *Pharnaces*. She tells him that in the Civil Wars of her Kingdom *Pharnaces*, in a Battle, assassinated her only Brother *Pacorus*: That a Peace being concluded, he came to her Father's Court to demand her in Marriage: That they sent her to *Rome* to solemnize the Nuptials: That *Pharnaces* could not leave his Kingdom because of the Civil Wars of the *Romans*: That at *Rome* she had resided with *Cato*, and that she had followed his Fortune. She adds, that *Pharnaces* himself had but a Day before confessed his murdering her Brother; and that besides her Aversion to this Marriage, his Guilt added to the Horror she had at such an Alliance. *Cato* promises her all possible Safety in *Utica*. *Arsene* goes of; *Cato* remains alone; and as he had said before in the Scene that she had a *Roman Soul*, he is now astonished at the

the Sentiments he feels for her, and takes Notice of the great Resemblance betwixt her and *Porcia*, his deceased Daughter. Last of all he declares the Arrival of *Phocas*.

## S C E N E III.

*Phocas, Artaban, and Cato.*

*Phocas* tells *Cato* of a great Reinforcement that was coming up to him. He brings to his Remembrance that when his Wife died, she left him a Daughter, who was brought up by the Wife of *Crassus*, and who was along with him when the *Romans* were routed by the *Parthians*, on which Occasion she was slain. *Phocas* tells him that his Daughter *Porcia* was still alive, and presents *Artaban* to him as the Person to whom her Safety was owing. *Artaban* gives him an Account of the Victory which the *Parthians* gained over *Crassus*, and tells him that *Porcia* becoming his Prisoner of War, he made a Present of her to *Arsaces*, who having lost his Daughter *Arsène*, for Reasons of State, adopted her. He shews him a Deed which King *Arsaces* had made before his Death, and entrusted to him, that he might shew to *Cato*. *Cato* reads it; and *Arsaces* in it intreats him not to deprive his Daughter *Porcia* of a Throne. *Cato* deplores his Misfortune, and inclines  
that

that his Daughter should abdicate the Crown. *Phocas* advises him to allow her still to possess her Kingdom, because the Aids she could afford might prove the Means of saving *Rome*. *Cato* for good Reasons rejects this Advice, and taking his Leave of them both, orders them not to speak any thing of the Matter to his Daughter, whom he himself wanted to inform of this Affair.

S C E N E IV.

*Cato and Pharnaces.*

After some Discourse upon the present Juncture of Affairs, *Pharnaces* presses his Marriage with *Arsene*. *Cato* tells him that he must no longer think of that, since he ought to look upon her as a *Roman* Lady. *Pharnaces* is surprized at his Answer, and desires him to explain himself. *Cato* promises to him very soon to reveal a great Secret publickly before all the City. *Pharnaces* tells him that he ought to think maturely of the Affair; that he had lost his Dominions, but that his Marriage with *Arsene* would render him Master of a powerful Kingdom, and that if he gave over Thoughts of that, he could no longer expect his Service; and last of all he entreats him to take Care of his Interests, his Liberty, and his Life. *Cato*  
despises



despises him; orders him to withdraw; tells him they could defeat the Enemy without his Assistance, and in fine lets him know, that *Rome* was yet free, and spoke in his Language, and that she would never truckle either to him or to Men of his Character.

## S C E N E V.

To Them, *Felix*.

*Felix* informs *Cato* that the Plains are covered with *Cæsar's* Troops, and that *Utica* had Reason to be afraid of Slavery. *Cato* says he is going to march forth against the Enemy, and again requests *Pharnaces* to be gone and join the Troops of *Cæsar*; on which he goes off.

## S C E N E VI.

*Pharnaces* and *Felix*.

*Pharnaces* boasts that he will be revenged for the Contempt shewn him by *Cato*; that in Spite of him, he shall have both the Hand and the Kingdom of *Arsene*, and that *Cato* shall fall a Victim to him. He discovers his Design of sending *Cato's* Head to *Cæsar* by *Timon* and *Arbates*. That in Recompence he will demand to be restored to his Kingdom,  
and

and *Arsene* in Marriage: Then with *Maxims* suitable to his Designs he quits the Stage, and the first Act ends.



A C T II. S C E N E I.

*Domitius* and *Phocas*.

*Domitius* informs *Phocas* that *Cæsar* was very soon to be in the Town of *Utica*. *Phocas* asks if his Arrival did not give them Hopes of Peace. *Domitius* is silent upon that Point, and only desires him to inform *Arsene* that *Pallas* had come into the City along with him, and that he had something of Consequence to impart to her. *Phocas* goes off the Stage. *Domitius* stays alone for a short while, and says that *Cæsar*, notwithstanding his brave and warlike Soul, is nevertheless in Love with *Arsene*. He sees *Cato* approach him, whose Presence strikes him with Veneration.

S C E N E II.

*Cato* and *Domitius*.

*Cato* reproaches *Domitius* for having sided with *Cæsar*. *Domitius* defends himself by  
plausible

plausible Reasons, and runs out in *Cæsar's* Praise. At last he desires an Interview between *Cæsar* and him, to deliberate upon the Interests of *Rome*. *Cato* consents to it, and asks him what Surety *Cæsar* demanded. *Domitius* answered him, that *Cæsar* insisted on no other Surety than the Virtue of *Cato*, but told him that he ought not to trust *Pharnaces* in *Utica*. *Cato* informs him, that *Pharnaces* depended on him: He describes the Situation of the Castle, into which *Cæsar* might come and talk with him without being seen by any Body: He says *Pharnaces* is on the Sea-Shore viewing his Fleet; that his Soldiers durst not come near him; that every thing was carefully looked after, and especially the Motions of *Pharnaces*: That *Cæsar* might therefore have an Interview with him in the Castle; and that the Affair might be transacted with the greater Secrecy, he proposes to remove the Guards from its Entrance. He adds, Tell *Cæsar*, nevertheless, that *Cato* sees very far into the Heart of Man, and that Artifice and Disguise cannot blind him.

## S C E N E III.

*Arsene*, *Phenice*, and *Domitius*.

*Arsene* at her Entrance orders *Domitius*, since he had heard of *Cæsar's* Love to her,  
to

to inform him that she should always look upon him with Contempt and Disdain, &c. She takes her Leave of *Domitius*, and seeing *Pharnaces* approach, endeavours to avoid him.

S C E N E IV.

*Pharnaces, Arsene, and Phenice.*

*Pharnaces* begs her to stay. *Arsene* loads him with Reproaches, putting him in Mind of her Brother's Death. *Pharnaces* inflamed with Wrath and Rage, tells her, that every Body condemned her Conduct; that *Cato* and the *Romans* complained of her, and were even ready to deprive her of her Hereditary Throne and Kingdom. He then proposes that she should go on board his Fleet, and go off with him. She answers, that if *Cato* should condemn her, she would submit; and upbraids her Lover of Cowardice, protesting that she never will marry him; but that she will think herself happy, could she be revenged on him with her own Hand. Upon this *Pharnaces*, in a Passion, reproaches her in very harsh Terms



## S C E N E V.

To Them, *Porcius*.

*Arsene* informs *Porcius* of *Pharnaces's* Pretensions, and begs his Support. *Porcius* enraged at the Calumnies with which *Pharnaces* loaded his Father, makes great Protestations to *Arsene*, and proposes to marry her. *Arsene* quits the Stage.

## S C E N E VI.

*Pharnaces* and *Porcius*.

*Pharnaces* with a haughty Air asks *Porcius* if he thought to gain a Kingdom by loving *Arsene*, and treats him with Contempt. *Porcius* speaking with Disdain of Royalty, adds, That without any Views to that, he should have thought of marrying *Arsene*, and that he wished she had been by Birth a Roman. *Pharnaces* tells him, that she is so in reality, and that *Cato* declared she was no Queen, and insinuates that *Cato* must want Candour, or she can be no Queen. *Porcius* answers, *It must be so*, since his Father had said it, and departs in Haste to satisfy himself. *Pharnaces* remains alone, and says he is confirmed in his Thoughts of *Porcius's* loving

loving *Arsene*, and that all his Hopes were destroyed if she should find that she was not a *Parthian*. He threatens to kill *Porcius*, &c.

S C E N E VII.

*Felix and Pharnaces.*

*Pharnaces* tells *Felix* that the Face of Affairs would soon be altered, and that the Troubles of *Africa* would soon cease; that the *Romans* having laid down their Arms, deplored the Death of their Friends; and that at last the Sweets of universal Peace were relished. He asks him if *Cæsar* approved of his Design, and the Proposal he had made him by *Timon* and *Arbates*, of securing to himself the Sovereign Power at the Price of *Cato's* Head, and if *Timon* and *Arbates* are returned? *Felix* replied, They were not. *Pharnaces* is willing to execute his Design with all possible Dispatch, and discovers the Stratagem which he intended to use for causing his Troops to enter *Utica* to kill *Cato*, and carry off *Arsene*. *Felix* tells him that the Guard was removed from the Gate of the Castle, and that this Circumstance would render his Enterprize so much the more easy. *Pharnaces* enjoins him Secresy, and departs to execute his Design; and thus the Act ends.



## A C T III. S C E N E I.

*Cæsar* and *Domitius*.

*Cæsar* says, it is for *Cato's* Interest that he demands this Interview; but that he would wish, if possible, to see *Arsene* before-hand. *Domitius* informs him that he should see her, but that it would be to no Purpose, since she despised him. After some Reasoning upon his own Love, and upon the War, he sees the Queen approaching, and takes his Leave of *Domitius*.

## S C E N E II.

*Cæsar* and *Arsene*.

*Arsene*, upon seeing *Cæsar*, knows him to be the *Roman* with whom she was in Love. She asks him if it was he who came to her Father's Court with the Complaints of *Cæsar*. He answers, It was; and that he himself was *Cæsar*. *Arsene* is troubled. *Cæsar* begins to explain himself more freely, and complains that his Passion was repaid with Disdain and Hatred. *Arsene* briefly informs him

him that she did not hate him: By this Confession, *Cæsar* is transported with Joy. *Arsene* blushes at the Declaration she has made, but at last confirms it, and says, that without her own Knowledge, she had hated what she most loved. At last she intercedes with him for the Deliverance of *Utica*, and for the Life of *Cato*, telling him, that nothing in the World was so dear to her as the Glory of *Cæsar* and the Life of *Cato*, &c. Then she goes off the Stage.

S C E N E III.

*Cæsar* and *Cato*.

*Cæsar* advises *Cato* to banish all Sentiments of Hatred, and promises to make him Partner in the Government with himself. With Horror *Cato* hears the Proposal. *Cæsar* on the one hand attempts to justify himself, and demands that *Cato* and his Friends should allow him to reign. *Cato* on the other hand accuses him of Tyranny, and rejects all Offers of Peace upon any other Terms than the *Liberty of Rome*. *Cæsar* represents to him the Danger to which they were reduced, and that they could hope for no Assistance from *Pharnaces*, who sought nothing so much as his Destruction. That he had sent two Traitors to make an Offer of his Head



to him, and that he had caused them to be detained. *Cato* commends him for his Magnanimity; but obstinately persisting in his ardent Wishes for the Liberty of *Rome*, he tells them that he would acquaint the *Romans* with his Offer, and that if they accepted of it, and assented to their own Ruin, for his Share he would chuse to die, and so he makes his Exit. *Cæsar* in a short Soliloquy breaks out into an Admiration of his Virtue, and says, That if he were not *Cæsar*, he would wish to be *Cato*, and to have such Sentiments of Liberty. *Pharnaces* comes up.

## S C E N E IV.

To Him, *Pharnaces*.

*Pharnaces* is surprized to see *Cæsar* in *Utica*, and tells him that he impatiently expects the Return of *Timon* and *Arbates*, whom he had sent to acquaint him that he would present him with the Head of *Cato*: That this was a Proposal which he ought not to treat with Indifference, as he could thereby finish a War which might be fatal to him if *Cato* lived. *Cæsar* rejects this Proposal with a becoming Horror, calls him Traitor, and hints to him, that the same may one Day be his Fate. On this he leaves him. *Pharnaces*

com-

complains that *Cæsar* had not so much as thanked him for his Offer; but, says he, His Haughtiness may chance to cost him dear. He then flatters himself with the Hopes of carrying off *Arsène*, which finishes the third Act.



A C T VI. S C E N E I.

*Cato* and *Porcius*.

*Porcius* requests of his Father to know the Answer which the Senate had made to *Cæsar's* Offers. *Cato* tells him, That he saw with great Pleasure an Unanimity among them in rejecting a Peace that was inconsistent with the Liberty of *Rome*, and that the *Romans* were determined to revenge the Injuries of their Country: He then requires him to swear an invincible Hatred against *Cæsar*. *Porcius* complying, asks of his Father whether or not the Queen of the *Parthians* was a *Roman*. *Cato* asks him how such a Thought came into his Head. *Porcius* answers, That *Pharnaces* had acquainted him that *Cato* himself was the Author of the Report. *Cato* asks if he loved him, advises him to have no Thought but of War; and tells

him, that tho' she was a *Roman*, his Views on her would be to no Purpose, as he should very soon know.

## S C E N E II.

*To Them, Arsene and Phenice.*

*Arsene* tells *Cato* that she was come with a Proposal to spare the Effusion of *Roman* Blood: She tells him that she must be unhappy while the Divisions of *Rome* continue: That she loved the *Romans* better than even the *Parthians*; and that tho' she was a Queen, she could not help wishing well to the Enemies of Kings. *Cato* declares, that if all the *Romans* had the same Regard for him, their Misery would soon end. At last *Arsene* tells him that the Suspension of Arms was almost expired, and begs him to prolong it, because she flattered herself with obtaining every thing of *Cæsar*. *Cato* seems to be amazed at this, and asks how that could be. *Arsene* says, that she will touch the Heart of *Cæsar*; that Heaven had bestowed upon her a Kingdom that could satisfy the whole Extent of his Ambition; that *Cæsar* might with her enjoy the Kingdom of *Parthia*. She vows that *Rome* never shall be disturbed; and that all the Fruits of her Love should be Peace, *Cato*, astonished to

to hear that she loved *Cæsar*, complains that his Virtue was exposed to the Indignity not only of seeing her attired as a Queen, but of her bearing a Heart susceptible of a Passion for a Tyrant. *Arsène* asks the Reason of this Astonishment; and *Cato*, without any other Answer, gives her *Arsaces's* Letter to read. After she has read it, she is transported with an Extasy of Joy to find herself the Daughter of *Cato*, as is *Porcius*, to find her his Sister. At last *Cato* tells her in a resolute Manner, that Royalty ought to be no Happiness to her, and that her Love for *Cæsar* was a Disgrace to her Birth and Character. He then exhorts her to act as a *Roman*, and at once to put an End both to her Ambition and Love. *Porcia*, after many Reflections, at length determines to prove her Birth by her Actions, however dear it may cost her Passion. *Cato* upon this embraces her. He then sees *Cæsar* approach them, that they may be Witnesses of the Interview.

S C E N E III.

To Them, *Cæsar*:

*Cæsar* desires *Cato* to let him know what were the Senate's Demands. *Cato* answers, That they demanded the very thing with which *Cæsar* threatned him, his Death, and



that in short they wished that the War would determine their Fate. *Cæsar* asks what he had done, and enumerates his Actions and good Offices. But *Cato* still treats him as a Tyrant. *Cæsar* puts him in Mind of the Disproportion of their Strength; and turning to the Princess, complains of the Harshness of *Cato*, which he said was no longer tolerable. *Porcia* reproaches *Cæsar* with insulting an Enemy whom he ought to honour, and at last tells him that there was one present who claimed his Respect. Whom have I to dread? says *Cæsar*. Know, replies the other, that *Cato* is my Father. This Point being cleared up, *Cæsar* makes Use of that as a Handle to propose a Match with *Arsene*, which might give Peace to the World. But this *Cato* rejects with great Firmness, telling him that he always had before his Eyes the Death of *Pompey*, who was Son-in-Law to *Cæsar*, a mistaken Happiness which hastened his Ruin; and that in short, he looked upon the Proposal as ignominious for him.

#### S C E N E IV.

To Them, *Domitius*.

*Domitius* acquaints them with the Treachery of *Pharnaces*, who with an armed  
Body

Body had made his Way as far as the Castle: That three or four *Romans*, together with the Confident of *Arsene*, had bravely resisted him; and that *Cato's* Son *Marcus*, having darted himself with great Courage into the Middle, attacked *Pharnaces*, whom he had killed; but that the latter had Strength enough, while *Marcus* was turning towards the other Enemies, to run him thro' the Back, so that the one died as a Hero, the other as a Villain; but that the rest of the Enemies were dispersed. *Cæsar* mentions the Treachery of *Pharnaces* with Horror; he takes leave of *Cato* by telling him, that since he has rejected Peace, he must prepare for War; and says to *Porcia*, To-morrow, if the Gods shall give me the Victory, I will lay my Sword at your Feet; and then goes off.

S C E N E V.

*Marcus* carried by the Soldiers.

*Cato*, *Phocas*, *Artaban*, and Attendants.

*Cato* looks upon the Body with great Resolution; pronounces an Encomium upon his Son; gives *Porcius* his best Advice, and exhorts his Friends to set sail and flee from the Vengeance of *Cæsar*; he gives them his last Adieu, and the Act ends.

A C T



## A C T V. S C E N E I.

*Cato, alone sitting by a Table with a Book before him, a naked Sword lying on the Table, and a Couch on the other Hand.*

*Cato pronounces the Discourse upon the Immorality of the Soul, as it is to be found in Mr. Addison's Cato.*

## S C E N E II.

*To him, Porcius.*

*Porcius, alarmed at the Sight of the naked Sword, wants to carry it off; but Cato prevents him, and then orders him to leave the Room. Porcius renews his affectionate Expressions; upon which Cato embraces him, and desires that he would go and see if his Friends were embarked, telling him that he himself in the mean while would endeavour to take some Repose. This comforts Porcius, and he leaves his Father in Bed with the Curtains drawn.*

## S C E N E III.

*Porcius and Porcia.*

*Porcius acquaints his Sister with the pleasing Hopes he entertained, that all would be well,*

well, and that there was a Probability of the Public Tranquillity being restored: He informs her of the Orders he had received from his Father, and of his reposing himself, and leaves the Stage.

S C E N E IV.

*Porcia and Phenice.*

They talk of their own Situation, and that of *Cato's*, for whom they tremble.

S C E N E V.

To Them, *Phocas.*

*Phocas* enters with an Encomium upon the refreshing quiet Slumbers that arise from Innocence, and tells them that he had seen *Cato* asleep.

S C E N E VI.

To Them, *Artaban.*

*Artaban* informs them that the Troops of *Cæsar* were making no Dispositions for an Attack; perhaps waiting the Answer of *Cato*.

S C E N E VII.

To Them, *Porcius, in a great Emotion.*

He informs them that he has been at the Harbour, where his Father's Friends were obliged



obliged to wait for want of a favourable Wind to carry them away. He tells them likewise that a Vessel was arrived from *Pompey's* Son, to acquaint his Father that he was doing his utmost to send him Reinforcements from *Spain*, to assist him to act against the common Enemy. — A Noise is heard — *Porcius* goes out, and immediately returns in a great Agony, telling them that *Cato* was killed. *Porcia* swoons.

## S C E N E VIII.

*To Them, Cato, carried in wounded.*

*Cato*, as he is dying, enquires at *Porcius* about his Friends; and if they are gone: He orders him to apply neither for Pardon nor Favour to the Enemy, but to do his best to restore the Liberties of his Country. He embraces *Porcia*; gives her his best Advice; especially that she would espouse the Man who should revenge the Wrongs of *Rome*. He comforts his weeping Friends, and dies.

*The Play ends.*





*A small Treatise of M. DE FENELON, Archbishop of Cambray, and Author of The Adventures of TELEMACHUS.*

**I**Mmediately after the Tragedy follows a small Treatise of Mr. *de Fenelon*, inserted in his Reflections upon Grammar, Rhetoric, Poetry, and History. The Author translates it, and he quotes it in his Answer to the Criticism that has been past upon him. This Tract gave me great Pleasure; I had never read it before, nor did I know that Mr. *de Fenelon* had wrote upon that Subject. As the Sentiments of that great Man can't be too public, I thought it not enough to quote them, without translating them as the *German* Author has done, that the Public may be entirely acquainted with his indispensable Precepts.

*The Sentiments of Monsieur FENELON upon a Plan of TRAGEDY.*

**T**RAGEDY ought to be characteristically different from Comedy. The first representing great Events to excite violent

lent Passions; the other is confined to the Representation of Manners in private Life.

As to Tragedy, I am far from thinking that any Rules are to be given for bringing those Entertainments to Perfection, wherein corrupted Passions are represented only to excite them. We know that *Plato*, and the Sage Legislators in the *Pagan* World, prohibited all Instruments of Music which might melt a Nation into Effeminacy, from a well-ordered State. What a Severity then ought to be observed by Christians with regard to loose Entertainments! Far from endeavouring to bring them to Perfection, I am pleased that all of that kind which we have is but lame and imperfect; our Poets having rendered them as languishing, trifling, and stale as Romances. All is filled up with Fires, Chains, and Tortures, and a Man there dies in good Health of Body and Mind. The Beauty of the Sun, or the Charms of *Aurora* are ascribed to very indifferent, very insipid Personages; their Eyes are two Stars; every Term is a Hyperbole, and not a Spark of true Passion enters into the whole. So much the better; for by this Means the Weakness of the Poison prevents the Decrease. But I think that Tragedy may receive a wonderful Force, should its Authors, without minding that giddy Romantic Love which makes such Havock in  
their

their Plays, follow only the true Philosophic Ideas of Antiquity.

Among the *Greeks*, Tragedy was entirely independent of unsanctified Love. For instance the *OEdipus* of *Sophocles* admits of no Passion foreign to the Subject. That great Man observes the same Conduct in his other Tragedies. Mr. *Corneille* in his *OEdipus* has weakened the Action, rendered it double, and distracted the Spectator by the Episode of a cold Amour betwixt *Theseus* and *Dirce*. Mr. *Racine* falls into the same Absurdity in his *Phedra*: He has made a double Plot, by joining with the furious *Phedra* the whining mistaken Character of *Hippolitus*. Had *Phedra* been abandoned to all the furious Transports of her Passion, the Action had then been simple and short, affecting and rapid. But our two Tragic Poets, with all the real Merit they possessed, were carried away by the Torrent of Custom, and yielded to the prevailing Taste for Romances. Wit had become the Fashion, and Love reigned thro' all. They imagined that it was impossible for an Audience to have sat two Hours without yawning, if some amorous Intrigue was not brought on to relieve them: They thought themselves obliged to hurry over the greatest and most affecting Subject, to make way for a languishing Hero who interrupts it. Farther, his Sighs must be ornamented with

Quibbles,



Quibbles, and his Despair tagg'd with Epigrammatic Points. This made the greatest Authors deviate into the grossest Absurdities, that they might please the Public. I shall give an Instance in the following Lines;

*Unrelenting Thirst of Glory,  
Whose transporting Joys I breathe,  
That my Name may live in Story,  
Bids me give myself to Death;  
Yet thy commanding Rage controul,  
Before Eternal Life I prove.  
To Death e'er I bequeath my Soul,  
Let me bequeath a Sigh to Love.*

Here was a Man who durst not die without Points and Witticisms.

I shall give another Instance of a Bombast Flowry Despair.

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*Pierc'd to the Heart  
With an unlook'd-for, yet a fatal Dart,  
The accurs'd Avenger of a righteous Wrong;  
The unhappy Victim of a Hate too strong.*

What a bombast affected Language is this for serious Grief! In my Opinion a certain empty Swelling, which is in the highest Degree improbable, ought to be cut off from Tragedy; as for Example, the following  
Verses

Verſes have ſomething in them very forced and unnatural.

*O eager Paſſion for a great Revenge,  
To which my Father's Death hath given  
Birth;*

*Impetuous Progeny of my Reſentment,  
How my great Sorrows claſp you to my Boſom!  
You fill my Soul with your unbounded Sway:  
O give, O give me a ſhort Time for Reſpite,  
That I may think on this my preſent State,  
On what I wiſh to win, and what I'd bett,  
Corneille's Cinna, Act I. Scene I.*

Mr. Boileau found a kind of Genealogy in the foregoing Verſes; firſt, *Eager Paſſions*, which produced an *impetuous Progeny*, and theſe again were claſped to the Boſom by *Sorrows*. The Speeches of great Characters in Tragedy ought to be all noble and lively, if they are in the paſſionate Strain; but then the Language of Paſſion is always natural, and without any ſtudied or affected Turns, for no Man would bewail his Misfortunes in that Manner.

Mr. Racine was not exempted from this Fault, which Cuſtom had rendered as it were neceſſary. Nothing is more unnatural than the Narration of the Death of *Hippolitus* at the End of the Tragedy of *Phedra*, which in other Reſpects is very beautiful. *Thera-*  
S *menes*

*menes*, who comes to acquaint *Theseus* with the Death of his Son, ought to have pronounced the Fact only in two Words, and even these he ought to have wanted Strength to pronounce distinctly. “ *Hippolitus* is dead. “ He died by a Monster sent from the Bottom of the Deep by the Wrath of Heaven. “ I saw it.” A Person thus affected, in such an Agony, and out of Breath, can he ever be supposed to amuse himself with the florid pompous Description of the Dragon?

*Her Eye and drooping Head appear'd  
To speak her mournful Purpose, &c. ———  
The Earth was mov'd, the Air diffus'd Infection,  
The Billow, on whose Backs he rode, recoil'd.  
Racine's Phedra. Act V. Scene I.*

*Sophocles* is far from this unseasonable improbable Elegance. On a like Occasion he puts in the Mouth of *OEdipus* the following broken agonizing Sentiments:

*All, all is now disclos'd. I see thee now,  
O Light! But soon must never see thee more.  
Unhappy Man! To what a Pitch I'm wretched!  
Whence, whence this sudden Fall'ring of my  
Tongue ———  
My Fortune, whether art thou fled! Wretch!  
Wretch!*

*Madness,*

*Madness, Despair, are link'd with the Remembrance*

*Of what I was, and am. Is there, my Friends,  
An Object now that I can see or love;  
That I can talk to, or can hear with Comfort?  
All, all is now Despair. Hence with a Tyrant,  
An execrable Villain, doom'd to be  
Abhor'd by Gods and Men.*

————— *Perish the Wretch,  
That in the frightful Desert, where expos'd  
And bound I lay, preserv'd this hateful Life.  
O barbarous Pity, what a Cup of Sorrow  
Had I and mine ne'er tasted, but for thee!  
A Father's Murder ne'er had stain'd my  
Hands,*

*Nor had my Love defil'd a Mother's Bed ———  
I'm giddy when I view my Depth of Guilt.  
Both, both my Parents ruin'd! — and by me!  
Who have a Brood by her who gave me Life.*

This is the Language of Nature when she sinks under Calamity. Nothing can be more distant from *quaint Phrase* and *Witticism*. We have five other Instances of the lively and simple Expression of Grief in the Characters of *Hercules* and *Philoctetes*.

If Mr. *Racine*, who had studied the great Models of Antiquity, had formed a Plan of a *French Tragedy* upon the Subject of *OEdipus*, in the Manner of *Sophocles*, without any subornate Intrigue of Love, and in the *Greek*



Simplicity, such an Entertainment must have been curious, affecting, rapid, and interesting. It might not indeed have been applauded, but it must have commanded the Affections, and poured forth the Tears. No breathing Time must have been left. A Love for Virtue, and a Horror for Crimes, must have rushed upon the Soul. In short, it must have had all the Effects designed by the most wholesome Laws. It could have given no Alarms even to the Purity of Religion itself. All that was necessary, was to cut off the false and the improper Ornaments.

The Narrowness of our Versification, and the frequent Returns of Rhime oftentimes oblige our best Poets, for the sake of a Jingle, to load their Lines with Epithets. In order to make one good Verse, they tag it to another poor one. For Instance, I am charmed when I read these Words:

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*Let him die.*

But it puts me out of all Patience, when that Line introduces another to this Purpose,

*Or with a brave Despair gain Victory.*

This unnatural Bombast is really disgusting; it can convey to us no Idea of Men  
who

who are engaged in serious, noble, and passionate Conversation. When Probability is taken away, the Spectator loses all the Pleasure of the Entertainment. I own that the Ancients a little exalted the Strain of the Buskin :

*An Tragica dissævit & ampullatur in Arte.*

*Horat. Epist. I. Ep. iii. v. 14.*

But he never could mean that the Buskin should deviate from the Imitation of true Nature. It is her's to give us a beautiful and a great Representation of her : But still a Man ought to speak as a Man. Nothing is more ridiculous than for a Hero, in the greatest Actions of his Life, not to join an unaffected Simplicity to the Grandeur and Strength of Expression,

*Projicit ampullas, & Sesquipedalia Verba.*

*Horat. Art. Poet. v. 97.*

It is sufficient to make *Agamemnon* haughty, *Achilles* fierce, *Ulysses* wise, and *Medæa* furious ; but a pompous and bombast spoils the whole ; and the greater the Characters, or the stronger the Passions one would represent are, the more he ought to study a noble irresistible Simplicity.

I can't help thinking that too bombast Speeches are often put in the Mouths of *Romans* : It is indeed true that their Thoughts had somewhat of a noble Elevation, but they always chose to express them in a natural

and easy Manner. Tho they were, in *Virgil's* Phrase, \* *Populum late Regem*, a People whose Power and Conquests were very extensive, yet they were as calm and moderate in expressing themselves in Conversation, as they were industrious in subduing those Nations who were jealous of their Power.

*Parcere Subjectis, & debellare Superbos.*  
*Virg. Æneid VI. v. 853.*

*Horace* has in other Words drawn the same Picture of them.

*Imperet Bellonte prior, jacentem lenis in hostem.*  
*Carm. Sæcul. v. 51, 52.*

There seems not to be a sufficient Agreement betwixt the Language of *Augustus* in the Tragedy of *Cinna*, and that modest Simplicity with which *Sueton* adorns all his Actions and Behaviour; for he left in *Rome* so great an Appearance of the ancient Liberty of the Common-Wealth, that he would not be called *Lord*. *Sueton's* Account of him runs thus: “ Not only by his Authority, but even by his Countenance, he checked this insolent Flattery, and next  
 “ Day

“ Day made a very severe Edict against it ;  
“ nor after this would he suffer himself to  
“ be stiled MY LORD, no not by his Chil-  
“ dren and Grand-children, either in Jest or  
“ in Earnest. ——— During his Consul-  
“ ship he walked generally on Foot ; and  
“ when not Consul, he often appeared  
“ in an open Chair, and received even the  
“ Compliments of the most promiscuous  
“ Mob. ——— In every Election of  
“ Magistrates he went about with his three  
“ Candidates, and sollicitated in the accu-  
“ stomed Manner. He likewise gave his  
“ Vote in the Tribe, like one of the People.  
“ ——— He trained up his Daughter and  
“ Grand-daughter in Spinning and House-  
“ wifry. ——— He lodged in an ordinary  
“ House belonging to *Hortensius*, remarkable  
“ neither for its Largeness nor its Ornaments,  
“ the Galleries of it being very short : ———  
“ Famed neither for Statues nor fine Walks ;  
“ and for forty Years he lay in the same  
“ Chamber both Summer and Winter. ———  
“ His Frugality, with regard to Furniture,  
“ appears from the Beds and Tables he left  
“ behind him, most of which scarce came  
“ up to the Elegance of a private Gentle-  
“ man. ——— His Supper consisted only  
“ of three, or at most, six Dishes, not of  
“ the most sumptuous kind, but given with  
“ the most social Benevolence. ——— His



“ Dress was generally home-spun, and made  
 “ by his Wife, his Sister, his Daughter, and  
 “ Grand-daughters. — He eat very little,  
 “ and what he did eat, was for the most  
 “ Part ordinary Food.”

Pomp and Shew did not so well agree with what they called *Roman Politeness*, as with the Luxury of a *Persian Monarch*. Notwithstanding the Severity of *Tiberius*, and the servile Turn for Flattery the *Romans* had in his Time and under his Successors, yet *Pliny* informs us that *Trajan* even then behaved like a good Fellow Citizen, and lived in an amiable Familiarity with those about him. The Answers of this Emperor are short, simple, void of Ambiguity, and free from the smallest Tincture of the Bombast †. All we read of the *Romans* in *Titus Livius*, *Plutarch*, and in *Cicero*, represents them as Men of an elevated Turn of Thought, but simple, natural, and modest in their Expressions. They bear no Resemblance to the stiff and over-grown Heroes of our Romances. A great Man should not declaim like a Player; but should nevertheless use strong and plain Words in his Conversation: He should say nothing low; but at the same time he should say nothing *affected* or *bombast*.  
 Ne

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† The Bas-reliefs on his Pillar represented him in the most modest Posture, even when at the Head of his Army.

*Ne Quicumq; Deus, Quicumq; adhibebitur  
Heros,*

*Regali Conspectus in Auro nuper & ostro,  
Migret in obscuras humili Sermone Tabernas,  
Aut dum vitat humum, Nubes & Inania captet,  
Ut festis, &c.*

*Horat. Art. Poet. v. 227 & Sequ.*

The Sublime of Tragedy ought not to hinder Heroes themselves from speaking with a Simplicity adapted to the Nature of the Subjects on which they talk to one another.

*Et Tragicus plerumq; dolet Sermone pedestri.*



CRITICISMS *upon* CATO, *by an*  
Anonymous Friend.

NOT only I myself, but all my Countrymen who have reaped any Advantage from the Progress of our Poetry, ought to acknowledge the Obligations we lie under to Mr. *Gottsched*, who has chalked out to us the Road (if I may so speak) of *Tragedy*. Should I attempt to give him all the Praises his Merit deserves, my Abilities would be unequal to the Task. However, tho' I am surprized at his Perfections, (which I am  
forced

forced to pass over in Silence) yet I can't help owning that I have found some Things in his *Cato* which I look upon as small Blemishes.

This Author, who so much blames the empty Scenes in the *English Cato*, has done his best to avoid the same Fault. The Expedient he uses for this Purpose is, *Naming the Person who next appears, as Cato comes, He appears.* In the four first Acts, consisting some of two, and some of three Scenes, he endeavours to extricate himself from *that Difficulty*, by this Stratagem, which I don't like, because, in my Opinion, it does not repair the Loss arising from the Scenes being empty.

As the Rules of the Drama make it necessary to let the Spectators into the Character of the chief Heroes of the Tragedy, our Poet makes *Arsene* describe to *Phenice* the true Character of *Cato* very fully. But because this happens just as *Cato* enters, and their Discourse lasts a considerable Time after he makes his Appearance, it is not probable but *Cato* must have heard some Part, which might have been avoided by his not entering so soon.

Two of my Friends are of my Opinion that *Cæsar*, as characterized in this Tragedy, is more reasonable than *Cato*. *Cato* is blameable for rejecting every Proposal with so much

much Obstinacy, and presenting himself to the polite *Cæsar* in a harsh, surly, nay, next to clownish Manner: For Example, in the third Scene of the fourth Act, *Cæsar asks Cato what the Roman Senate in Utica wished for?* Cato answers, *That that should befall thee with which thou threatnest her*; that is to say, *Thy Ruin, thy Overthrow, and in fine, thy Death*. Some Foreigners have said, *It was not to be wondered at if Cæsar lost all Patience*.

As to *Cæsar* and *Cato's* being represented equally great, what follows in the same Scene is a Proof of it, and in my Opinion, from the Sentiments of both, one may say of *Cæsar* and of *Cato*, what was said in *France* of the *Alexander* and *Porus* of *Racine*, *Either Cæsar is too great for Cato, or Cato too diminutive for Cæsar*; both the one and the other is a Stranger to true Grandeur; for *Cæsar* is too thirsty of Power, and *Cato* too stiff in Principle.

*Pharnaces* and *Porcius* sometimes use very trifling Expressions; I have likewise observed that *Porcius*, whose Character is elsewhere well enough sustained, says something out of Character in the last Scene. He proposes that the Corps of his Father should be presented to *Cæsar* with a View to move his Pity. He must have by this time forgot the Advice of his Father, when dying; *But thou shalt*



*shalt never ask a Favour at the Hands of thy Enemy, and shalt never neglect any thing for the Liberty of Rome.* I think he would have, with more Propriety, made *Cato's* Son say every thing that could encourage the rest of his Friends to take Advantage of the News they heard of *Pompey*, and promise, if the Exigency required, to imitate his Father by dying, rather than abandon them.

The Author of the *German Cato* finds Fault with the *English* Performance, because in it the Actors make their Entrances and Exits without the Spectators knowing why ; but in my Opinion he himself has fallen into the same Fault, at least in one Place : For in the fifth Scene of the Second Act *Porcius* appears upon the Stage with *Arsene*, to whom he thus eagerly speaks, *Princess, be not uneasy about your Safety ; should all perish, Porcius shall be thy Friend. Tread in your Father's Footsteps, by protecting Innocence. Give but the Word, and my Sword shall be unsheath'd in your Defence.* At these Words *Arsene* turns her Back upon the Defender of her Liberty, and goes off without speaking one Syllable ; I could never be reconciled to this dumb Departure.

In short I think *Cato* in one Place speaks a little out of Character. In the third Scene of the First Act, when he receives the News of his Daughter's being alive, he bursts out  
into

into these Expressions ; *How? What? My Child alive? What do you say?* This sure is not the same *Cato*, who when he saw the Corps of his Son, appeared so calm, that one would have rather thought him transported with Joy, than deprest with Sorrow.

As for the Versification I shall only observe that *you* is often used instead of the *thou*; but I remember to have read in a Performance of the same Mr. *Gottsched*, that even in Prose Dialogues we ought rather to use the *Tu* of the *Latins*, than speak in the Plural Number like the *French* and *Germans*, who, one would think, were addressing themselves to a Dozen of People. Thus I believe he might lawfully (according to his own Observation) make Use of the *Tu*, since the Characters are *Roman*. These few Remarks I have made in running over *Cato*, (which in other Respects is an excellent Performance) without any Intention to detract from the real Merit of its Author.



*The Author's Answer to the above*  
CRITICISM.

**T**HIS Tragedy has had the good Fortune to fall into the Hands of able Critics, nay, in some measure, to meet with Applause.

Applause. I therefore don't at all repent the Pains it has cost me, and I am infinitely obliged to any Gentleman who shall communicate to me his own, or his Friend's Sentiments.

I never imagined that either an *Epic* or *Dramatic* Poem can be quite faultless. Human Imperfection will not admit of Perfection in the smallest Pieces of Poetry; therefore we can't flatter ourselves to think it can enter into Works of greater Importance and Extent. *Homer*, who, by the Confession of all the World, has produced two Masterpieces in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and who was so much admired by *Horace*, is by the same *Horace* owned sometimes to have slept, tho' in the following Verse he defends him.

“ *Verum Opere in Longo Fas est obrepere*  
“ *Somnum.*”

“ But in a Work of considerable Length it  
“ is pardonable sometimes to sleep.”

He has even before observed, that there are Faults which may be overlooked by a Poet, even when he has succeeded in the greatest Part of his Work.

*Sunt delicta tamen, quibus ignovisse velimus.*

Yet

Yet there are some Faults of such a Nature, that they may be pardoned by us.

This my learned Critic has undoubtedly had in his View, when he deigned to honour my *Cato* with his Remarks; for I am persuaded that the great Gentleness with which he has treated this Attempt in Tragedy, has prevailed with him to overlook more considerable Faults than these he has marked. Therefore, if I shall answer his learned Criticisms, it can never be thought to be with a View of vindicating myself entirely, nor to make the World believe that what he has criticized ought to pass for Beauties. No, I am not so much bewitched by Self-love; I own, and am sincerely conscious, that I am liable to Faults. Let me be allowed however to advance somewhat in my own Defence, and to intermix it with some Reflections which may revive a Taste for Dramatic Poetry.

The first Fault I am charged with, is not without Foundation; for one may easily perceive a Fault in another, yet be guilty of the same himself. *Horace* says,

*In vitium ducit culpæ fuga, si caret arte.*

I own that I have too often repeated this Connection of the Scene, *I see him coming, He appears, &c.* and it is only the Repetition  
that



that makes the Fault, for the Thing itself is none. When two Actors are upon the Stage, and one of them sees another coming up, for him to say *I see him, or there is the Man I expected, or I hope he has not overheard us*, is no Fault. This I can prove by the Example of our best Dramatic Poets. *Peter Corneille* in his *Cid*, Act III, Scene I, makes *Elvira*, who sees *Chimene* coming, say, *She returns. She comes. I see her* †.

I believe the Reader will dispense with more Examples either from *Corneille* or other Poets, for they are easily to be met with every where: I have brought the Examples from the best Piece of *Corneille* on Purpose; for it is certain when he wrote that, he was unacquainted with the only true Connection of the Scenes in which he has been so often defective

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† Our Author here brings five Examples from the *Cid*; but we are to remark that the Poet has distinguished this Connection of Scenes into two Kinds. The first of the Actor who enters, which connects the Conversation with those on the Stage: The second of the Actor who comes in unexpectedly, and makes the other retire. But the Examples which the Poet has cited in his Answer, and which I did not think proper to be inserted here, because all the World knew them, are all Examples of the first kind; and it is very easy to prove in such a Case that there is no Fault in naming the Actors who enter. As to the second Case, which is that of the Actor who comes on the Stage, and who occasions those who are already on it to make their Exit, which is the principal Point, we shall see how he proves that this Connection of the Scenes does not leave the Stage empty.

defective in many Respects. How often does it happen, that two Actors don't see one another, and other two appear without knowing why? But *Corneille*, without knowing the Rule for the Connection of Scenes, or without chusing to follow it, has put into the Mouths of his Characters the Connections we have seen, and in the natural Method we have quoted; and pray why may not I do the same in *Cato*? \*

As to the second Remark of my Article, he seems to think, that the Recital made by  
T
*Arsene,*

\* In my Opinion, the Author defends himself very weakly upon this Point. All the World knows, he speaks true; but it was of this second Kind of Connection of Scenes, rather than that of the first, that he ought to have given us Examples. After all, tho' he really gave us these Examples, he was not authorized to follow them at the Expence of good Sense. It is very probable, that two Actors, in seeing a third come up, by whom they would be neither seen nor heard, should leave the Stage in naming him aloud; but he is not named only, that the Scenes do not remain empty: and it is not ordered by *Aristotle*, that this Connection should be accounted a just one. Let us examine the *OEdipus* of *Sophocles*, which the same *Aristotle* gives us as a Model, thro' the whole of his Art of Poetry, and we shall find none of those Connections of Scenes. From the Beginning to the End, all the Actors who appear have a Reason for their doing so, and the Scene never remains empty. This is the Rule for the Connection of Scenes, and these, who for their own Ease have found out another, are much to be blamed. Our Poet has for his Vindication produced Examples of this new Rule, which will never gain Credit with Posterity, unless an universal Corruption should prevail; for, as I said before, it is repugnant to good Sense, and our Masters in this way will not admit of it.

*Arsene*, to describe the Character of *Cato*, is defective, because that Actress, after declaring the Arrival of *Cato*, goes on in her Recital in such a Manner, as that *Cato* must have heard her. These are her Words: Phenice, *don't you see how the Splendor of his Wisdom shines, even amidst his Grief! Admire then that Hero to whom no Mortal is comparable. The Gods have in vain struck him with reiterated Blows of adverse Fortune. He yet remains firm and unshaken, and boldly encounters their Wrath by his Constancy.*

I agree that on a short and narrow Theatre, such as that of *Leipsic*, *Cato* coming slowly up, might have heard some of these Words: But upon a larger Theatre, such as that of the Elector of *Dresden*, this could not be the Case, and the Actress might have ended her Speech before he was within hearing. If we suppose that a Man, so sage and venerable as *Cato*, ought not to enter the Stage running, in the time that eight Verses were repeating, he may reasonably be supposed to make twelve or fifteen Steps before he came so near as to hear her.

But tho' one should suppose that *Cato* hears a Part of *Arsene's* Discourse, what Harm can arise from that? Perhaps she does it on Purpose to let him know the high Notion she had of his Virtue; and one can't reasonably conclude that it is from a Principle



ple of Flattery she commends *Cato* when he appears, or from her thinking that he hears her, because she begins his Encomium with the Scene, and before he appears. Therefore neither the Rules of the Stage, nor of Probability, can be violated.

As to the third Remark of my Critic, it indeed affects the very Essentials of Dramatic Poetry. It is certain that the principal Character in the Play ought to be most strongly marked; and the Poet ought likewise to endeavour all he can to interest the Audience in its Favour, that it may be the Object of all their Cares and Compassion. This is the Rule in which I am said to fail, and if the Charge is true, it is no doubt a monstrous Blunder.

To vindicate myself in this Particular, I might instance Mr. *Deschamp*, who has done the same thing in his *Cato*. But that can't avail me; and it may be told me that I ought not blindly to follow the Mistakes of my Original; I must therefore vindicate myself by Arguments *a priori*, and prove that in my Tragedy *Cato* is much greater than *Cæsar*; and if this last appears as at first great as *Cato*, his Greatness serves only to add to that of the principal Hero.

For this Purpose we are previously to remark that the Character of a Hero consists in Patriotism, in a virtuous Magnanimity;



nor can a Love of Power, nor Tyranny disguised in the Shape of Virtue, pass for *true Greatness*. For instance, *Marcus Aurelius* is forced to make War for the Happiness and Safety of his Country. He is destitute of Money, and rather than oppress the *Romans* with a Tax, he puts up to Sale his most precious and richest Moveables: The Senators and Citizens flaunting and showing away in his Royal Spoils and Imperial Equipage, give him no Concern, provided he can beat the Enemy without impoverishing his Subjects: He pardons the Life of *Cassius*, who had rebelled against him, and intercedes with the Senate for his Wife and Children. *Nero*, on the contrary, affects a boundless Magnificence; he diverts the City with pompous Entertainments, but it is with the Money of the Citizens and People, and the Plunder of the Exiled and Proscribed. He refuses, it is true, to sign one Dead Warrant, but he wishes the *Roman* People had but one Neck, that he might cut it off at a Stroke. There is not a Man who will not prefer the Poverty of *Marcus Aurelius* to the Magnificence of *Nero*; and the Intercession of the one for the Offender, to the Pity of the other for the Criminal.

These very characteristical Differences are found betwixt *Cæsar* and *Cato*. *Cato* is greater thro' Misfortunes. *Cæsar* dazzles by

a political Clemency; but this Virtue is counterfeited, and at the bottom a Passion for Revenge and Power. The Pardon he offers is but a Snare to entangle the Opposition to his Views. *Cato*, on the other hand, will have nothing for himself, but all for *Rome*; and if he can't obtain her Freedom, he chuses to die. *Cæsar* offers him Favours, but he rejects them all without the Liberty of his Country. This *Cæsar* refuses to comply with; and *Cato* despairing to force him into a Compliance, resolves to kill himself.

Is not unfortunate Virtue infinitely greater than the Happiness arising from the Tinsel Virtue of *Cæsar*? *Cato*, it is true, is obstinate; but ought not the Hero of a Tragedy to have some Faults to excite our Compassion? This is taught us by *Aristotle*. Was not *OEdipus* in some manner the Cause of his own Misfortune, when by his unaccountable Rashness he killed his Father, tho' without knowing him? Did not the Rage and Fury of *Orestes* occasion the Murder of his own Mother, a Thing which to him proved the fruitful Source of Woe? Is not *Phædra* to be blamed for her own Death, since she declares her Love for *Hippolitus* to her Confident, and even before the Chorus? It is then necessary that some Part of *Cato's* Misfortunes should be owing to his own Faults, which in his Circumstances can

only happen from an Obstinacy, either the Effect of Stoical Philosophy, or his own Constitution. But still Compassion prevails; he is so virtuous, so disinterested, so zealous for the Good of his Country, so unshaken under his Misfortunes, so magnanimous, so upright, that one must admire, love, and pity him in Death. If *Cato* had been perfect and faultless, the Spectators must have been unaffected with his Fate. It is objected to me, that my way of speaking and thinking is low, and ill adapted to the Characters. This Observation is really of the highest Importance; and I don't know if I shall be able to clear myself of the Charge. The common Opinion is, that the Style of Tragedy ought to be very lofty and sublime; but I don't know if they who think so have not adopted this Maxim by reading *Seneca's* Tragedies, who is always so lofty, even upon the most common Subjects, that he loses Sight of Nature and Probability, and has already been so much blamed by the most learned Poets, that we ought to take for our Models the Tragic Authors of *Greece*, who make Use of noble and unaffected Expressions, but never of Thoughts that are forced or bombast.

The modern *French* Poets have been found fault with upon this Account in a very lively Manner by *Riccoboni*, in his *Dissertation*  
upon

upon *Modern Tragedy*, and by an anonymous *Italian Writer*, in a Piece intitled, *Paragone Della Poesia Tragica*; as also by Mr. *Bocelli*, in the Preface of *Merope de Maffei*. That these three Foreigners should condemn the *French Tragedians* for this Fault, does not seem strange to me; for Mr. *Fenelon* in his *Thoughts upon Dramatic Poetry*, which I have subjoined to my *Tragedy*, has blamed them for the same Fault. *Father Brumoy*, in his *Theatre of the Greeks*, does the same in many Passages; and *Horace* had done it long before him in these Words:

*Et Tragicus plerumq; dolet, &c.*

Thus the Tragic Poet ought to make *Telephus* speak in a simple Stile. When he represents him as an exiled and misfortunate Prince, he ought to banish from him the Sublimity of Language, and every thing swelling either in the Thoughts or in the Expressions, if he would move the Spectator to Compassion. This *Seneca* did not believe. And this *Lohenstein* did not advert to †.

Probability is the true Rule for the Tragic  
T 4
Stile,

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† An excellent *German Poet*, who lived at the Time of the first Reformation of that Stage.



Stile, and the Poet is indispensably obliged to stick close to Nature, according to *Horace*,

*Respicere Exemplar vitæ Morumq; jubebo  
Doctum Imitatorem, & veras hinc ducere  
Voces.*

How should I have observed this Rule, if I had made young *Porcius* speak like *Cato*, or like the low-spirited head-strong and malicious *Pharnaces*, or like *Cæsar*? Must not the Difference of their Characters appear in their Conversation? The Personages in Tragedy are not all Poets, nor can they talk and think in the artificial Manner of *Seneca* and *Lobenstein*, who are condemned by all the World. No! they are Men who talk a Language agreeable to their State, their Age, their Sex, their Fortune, and their Character, lest, as *Horace* has beautifully observed,

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*Forte Seniles  
Mudentur Juveni Partes, Puerog; Viriles;  
Semper in Adjunctis Ævoq; morabitur aptis.*

This I believe may be a sufficient Answer to the first Exception of my Critic upon this Head. As to the Expressions of *Porcius* and *Pharnaces*, which are thought too low, I answer, That in the last Scene *Porcius* resembles himself no more, since he has forgot  
his

his former Courage, and proposes that his Father's Body should be carried to *Cæsar* in these Words: "Come, carry the dead Body  
" into *Cæsar's* Presence, we don't know but  
" his unrelenting Heart may be moved,  
" when he sees that *Hero bathed in his own*  
" *Blood.*" In effect, *Porcius* is no more like himself. Neither can we suppose him to be so, considering his Youth and Circumstances; for if I had made him like his Father, how would he have resembled a young Man? Or how should I have observed *Horace's* Rule with regard to the Character of Youth, the Fierceness, the tumultuous Passions, and the Inconstancy of which he has beautifully described in one Line,

*Sublimis, Cupidusq; & amata relinquere Pernix.*

These three Qualities are very plainly discovered in *Porcius*. He is fierce and headstrong, while his Father was alive, to support him, and it is for this Reason that he opposes *Pharnaces* with so much Warmth and Keenness: His Passion for *Arsene* is impetuous, and in the end he proves inconstant: For after having answered, with a noble Resolution, that he would never disregard the Instructions his Father gave him, nor fail to follow the Course of Life he had prescribed him, he quits this laudable Design, and struck  
with

with the Death of his Father, endeavours to gain *Cæsar* by the mildest Measures. This is the true Character of such a young Man as Nature and Experience present.

I am likewise blamed with committing the same Fault with which I have charged Mr. *Addison*, by making *Arsene* in the third Scene of the second Act leave *Porcius*, who promises to defend her against *Pharnaces*, without answering one single Word. But is there any thing surprizing in this, especially when she sees *Pharnaces* coming up, her Brother's Murderer, and her own hated Lover; in fine, a Man whom she industriously shuns?

My Critic farther objects to me, that I have altered the Character of *Cato*, especially in the Passage where he rejoices at finding his Daughter alive, after he had believed her dead. He says that *Cato* ought not to be so transported as to enquire about her Life four times, as he does. But I ask, whether *Cato*, in spite of all his Philosophy, is not still a Man? The Stoics never maintained that the Affection of a Father ought to be quite stifled. The Emperor *Marcus Aurelius* shed Tears for the Death of his Masters; and when some of his Courtiers asked him if such a Conduct became an Emperor as well as a Philosopher, he answered them, *Allow me for once, I beseech you, to be a Man as well*  
as

*as an Emperor.* Why might not *Cato* have the same Privilege granted him? The Stoics prepared themselves to encounter the most terrible Calamities of human Life; and it is partly for this Reason, and partly because his Son *Marcus* has fallen so gloriously, that *Cato* hears the News of it with so little Emotion, and even with an Air of Pleasure; but all the Philosophy in the World can't have such an Effect upon a Father, as to make him quite unconcerned when he hears that his Daughter, whom he believed dead, is still alive. In this Case *Cato* ought to be allowed to give way to the Sentiments of Humanity.

Besides, if I had made any of the Personages in my Tragedy address one another in a clownish rustic Manner, I believe our *Germans* would have been highly shocked at it. In fine, if we heard an Inferior say, *As for thee, my Prince, &c.* or a Son to his Father, *I will tell thee, my Father*, we could not have bore it, and this has made me endeavour to light upon an agreeable Medium, by serving myself alternately, and as the Case required, of the *you* and the *thou*. I must nevertheless confess, that it had been better, had I always used the latter; if I was after this to write a Tragedy, I should lay it down as a Rule to myself, *always to make Use of it, and likewise to imitate the noble Simplicity of the ancient Manners* to recommend them

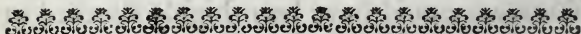


to the Stage ; but others will perfect what I have so weakly laid the Foundation of.

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*Fungar Vice cotis, acutum  
Reddere quæ ferrum valet, exors ipsa secandi.*

*There are also added the Author's Answers to some Criticisms that were made upon him after his Letter was printed ; wherein he very handsomly defends himself for not making CATO die altogether, according to Historical Truth. The Critic would have wished that he had tore out his very Intrails ; and our Poet, upon just Grounds, shews the Impossibility of doing so, even in Ricital.*



**I** FLATTER myself I have not judged amiss, when at the Beginning I said People might reap some Advantage from the Reflections of Mr. Gottsched, which to me appear very solid. And as for the Public, tho' it should only learn, that in Germany Authors think as justly as in any other Nation, and that the Theatre, and the Laws of it are as well known there as elsewhere, yet I hope it will think this an useful Piece of Knowledge.

I thought it would be agreeable to the Public to give some Account of the Number and Nature of the Pieces wrote by *Hanns-fach*, the first Dramatic Poet who appeared in *Germany*, as also of the Works of *Opitz*, *Gryphius*, and *Lohenstein*, whom I have already mentioned, and a Catalogue of whose Works I shall hereafter add for the Reader's Satisfaction.





*The Design proposed by the first  
Writers of Greek TRAGEDY.  
The Rise, Progress, and Ruin of  
Italian TRAGEDY. Of the New  
Italian TRAGEDY.*

WITHOUT repeating what has been often said of the Original of Tragedy, it is sufficient for my present Purpose that I explain the Purposes for which the ancient *Greeks*, its Inventors, designed it.

One thing is plain, that every *Greek* Tragedy had two Purposes; one of the Fable, the other of the Poet. The first had stated Rules, as it served to mend the Heart, and regulate the Passions; the other to correct the State, and improve political Virtues. For Instance, in the *Palamedes* of *Euripides*, the End which the Poet proposed was to put the Injustice of the Sentence of the *Athenians* against *Socrates*, upon the Accusations of *Annius* and *Aristophanes*, into a strong Light, by representing the Persecutions of *Palamedes* by *Ulysses*: Hence it happened that *Aristophanes*, to be revenged upon  
*Euripides*,

*Euripides*, who had exposed him in his Tragedy, wrote his Comedy of the *Frogs*, which is a Satyr on the *Tragic Poet*.

We have no reason to doubt that the *Greek Poets*, in their Tragedies, had it in View to excite and keep alive the public Detestation of *Tyranical Government*, then so abhorred by the *Athenians*; and on that Account they have represented the Vices of Princes as the fruitful Sources of all the Calamities attending their Royal Families. It is true that *Aristotle*, who lived so near the Times of these *Dramatic Poets*, would have overlooked, or been ignorant of the Purposes I have mentioned, if they really had any such Meaning.

But this Objection may be answered, by observing that the Design of the Poet, to correct or counsel the Government, was kept as secret and dark as possible, lest he might have irritated the Administration by his Liberties in Writing. Besides we may easily conceive that *Aristotle*, who was the Tutor of *Alexander*, the Master and Enslaver of *Greece*, had the Glory and Interest of his Master too much at Heart, or perhaps was too dextrous a Courtier, to tell the World that the End of all Tragic Poets was to create an Abhorrence of Kings; and that they never met with so universal Applause, as

when



when they represented Princes in the most odious Colours.

After the *Greeks*, the *Romans* composed Tragedies, but without any other Aim than to transport to *Rome* all the *Greek* Arts and Sciences; the *Italians* and *French* likewise have wrote Tragedies, but without having any political Ends in View; they having wrote them purely as public Entertainments, proper to make their Countrymen Sharers of the Diversions common in other Countries.

Before Tragedy appeared in *Italy*, which was about the Year 1520, the *Italians*, for the fifteenth Century, had been used to see frequent Representations of the Passions of *Christ*, the Lives of Martyrs, and of Virgins; but these Shews were commonly played only during Lent, and in Churches. And as the Spectators repaired to them from a Principle of Devotion, when the Representation was over they were charmed to feel the Emotions of Grief and Tenderneſs in their Hearts; which they looked upon as a Proof of their Sensibility for the Truths of their Religion.

But, excepting these Times of Lamentation and Mourning, the *Italians* had no other View in seeing a Play, but to laugh and amuse themselves. The first Poets who exhibited Tragedies to the People, having sent the Spectators home melancholy and grieved,

grieved, the Public was soon weary of this new kind of Diversion: The Authors of those Pieces upon cruel Subjects, not reflecting that the political Views of the *Greek* Poets in the Catastrophes which they wrought up before the Eyes of a Republic, the jealous Enemy of Tyrants, could have no Place among the *Italians*, a People, whose Government was more regular, and their Manners more gentle. However, Tragedy kept its Footing for some Time in *Italy*, by the Pleasure which that Lettered Age took in seeing the ancient Representations revived. Men of Learning had before their Eyes only the wonderful Productions of the *Greek* and *Latin* Poets: But the Heavy and the Dull, on whom, in *Italy*, the Success of a Play depends, being insensible of this Pleasure, Tragedy was soon lost, and exhibited only at Feasts, on Occasion of the Births and Marriages of their great Men. But now the World is quite weary of them, they being thought very improper for public Rejoycings, and Comedies are substituted in their Place, as I have said elsewhere.

*Tressino*, whose Ideas were commonly very just, was the first who presented a Tragedy in the *Italian* Language: He chose a well-known Subject, because he wanted that the Spectators should be well acquainted with it. I believe the Reason of his taking a Fable

from History, rather than one of his own Invention, in which he was very fruitful, was to prevent Criticisms upon his Undertaking.

I shall not here enter into the common Question, whether a Poet, in writing a Tragedy, ought to adopt a historical or a fabulous Plot. *Castell-vetro* has treated that Subject so copiously, that I shall presume to say nothing after so great a Man. *Tressino* exhibited the first Tragedy, and chose *Sophonisba*. The Action and Catastrophe are entirely historical: For that Princess dies by the Poison sent her by *Masiniissa*. The Action is interesting, and very proper to move; but not of so horrible a Nature as to oblige the Spectators to leave the Play-house with melancholy Looks and distorted Features. If the Dramatic Authors, who followed him, had imitated him in this Tragedy, they might have not only got Footing, but might have flourished to a great Degree in *Italy*. But Men of Learning, at that Time, probably judged that this Tragedy was no Pattern to copy after; and in comparing it with *Greek* Originals, they perhaps did not find enough of Blood and Murder in it. They were fond of copying exactly after the *Greek* Poets, and even wanted to improve upon them: And since the Time of *Tressino* we have seen *Lorbeche del Giral di*, *La Semiramide del Manfredi*



*Manfredi, la Canace di Speron Speroni*, and a great many others which have frightened the *Italian* Spectators out of their Wits.

If one were at *Pains* to compare the Tragedies I have named, together with some others, with the *Greek* Tragedies, one might there see an exact Imitation of the *Greek* Originals, and consequently they must be owned to be complete Tragedies. It is true that at present, because the *Stile* has nothing of the Bombast, and because their Maxims and Sentiments are quite simple and natural, the *French*, and even some *Italians*, refused to look upon them as Tragedies.

The Tragedies which continued in *Italy* for the following Age, remained buried in the general Corruption of Learning. Since that Time it has never recovered; and if very rarely some *Italians* write a Tragedy, it is quite neglected. Among all the Tragedies wrote since the Year 1620, I believe we cannot find a complete Model, for if any of them have Beauties, these Beauties are mingled with very great Imperfections. For Instance, the *Aristodemo of Dollori* is an excellent Tragedy, and upon the Stage has a wonderful Effect; but it is wrote in so Lyric a *Stile*, that the Language is quite unsupportable: On the other hand, those who succeed him to the Year 1700, and which are but few, are acknowledged by the learned



Men of *Italy* themselves to have succeeded no better.

Since that Period, the *Italian* Theatre has taken a new Form. Mr. *Martelli* has wrote a good many Tragedies in Alexandrine Verses that rhyme. These kind of Verses were at once both admired and censured, and are not unknown in *Italy*, because they are two Verses of seven Syllables joined together; and because we have some ancient Stanzas of a *Sicilian* Poet's Verses of the same Measure, which perhaps may give the Hint to the *French* Alexandrine; for this *Sicilian* is one of the most ancient Rhimers. Some time after, Mr. *Gravina* wrote five Tragedies; and the Marquis *de Maffer* brought his *Merope* upon the Stage: But hitherto the *Italians*, so far as appears, have never established any Standard with regard to Tragedy, that may be accommodated to our Age and Manners; the Form of the *French* Tragedy not being at all agreeable to their Taste, as I shall shew by and by.

*Gravina* has been perhaps too zealous an Imitator of the *Greeks*: But the Marquis *de Maffer* has not been so scrupulous upon this Head; tho' his *Merope*, as to its Fable, is *Greek*, yet it is accommodated to our Manners, so as not to offend the Spectators; and tho' in the *Action*, *Cresfonte* is bound, a Javelin brought to dispatch him, and *Merope* introduced

introduced upon the Stage with a Hatchet in her Hand, all which have been blamed, yet these two Incidents have been applauded by every Audience in *Italy*, who have a Taste for, and admire these ancient Manners. It is said that the same Author has wrote another Tragedy, which is now locked up in his Closet. I don't doubt of its Excellence; and if it has not yet been brought on the Stage, it must be owing to the *Italian* Players. For these ten Years they have played only wretched Tragi-Comedies; and having thrown up Tragedy, that Author is perhaps unwilling to trust his Piece with Actors who have fallen into a Desuetude of acting true Tragedy.



Of the Rise and Reformation of  
FRENCH TRAGEDY.

**I**TALIAN Tragedy began with the sixteenth Century, long before Tragedy appeared in *France*. If they who talk of *Italian* Tragedies, would be at Pains to compare them with the *French* of the same Age, they will find the former grave, majestic, wrote with Dignity, conceived with Good-sense, and exactly according to the severest

Rules of the Drama. On the other hand, we shall find the *French* confused and artless, languid in its Sentiments, improbable in the Fable, and irregular in its Conduct. In short, if we compare the *French* with the *Italian* Tragedies, with regard to Stile, the *Italians* have this Advantage, that the Stile of their first Tragedies has never grown antiquated, while that of the *French* is become quite shocking, and entirely banished the Stage. It is far otherwise in the Case of *Italian* Tragedy which began in the Age of *Petrarch*, who embellished that Tongue with all its finished Graces and Perfections: And I myself have, with Applause, played in 1712, in the *Sophonisba* of *Tressino*, and the *Orestes* of *Ruccelai*, who were their two most ancient Tragic Poets.

*Peter Corneille* reformed and brought the *French* Tragedy to its utmost Perfection. *Rotron* himself, who had trod the compleat Round of Theatrical Extravagance, when he saw the first Tragedy of *Corneille*, corrected his Faults, and composed his *Vincellaus*, which may be looked upon as a good Play. We may therefore call Monsieur *Corneille* the Father of the *French* Stage, nay, the very Inventor of *French* Tragedy; because his Tragedies, those of his Brother, those of *Racine*, and of all succeeding Poets, resemble neither the *Greek*, the *Latin*, the  
*Italian*,

*Italian*, nor the ancient *French* Tragedy. But these great Men lived at a Time when the *French* Court was the Model of Gallantry, and the Pattern of Taste.

They thought proper to soften the Severity of Tragedy, in order to recommend it to the Liking of their young King and Court ; and for this Purpose they made Love the Master and Controuler of their Stage. I don't know if I should be much in the wrong, if I declare that *French* Tragedy is the elder Daughter of Romance, since a romantic Strain is so predominant thro' it all. This Taste was then so prevailing, that *Thomas Corneille*, in his *Timocrates*, has done nothing but copied *Calander*. In a short time Love became the Tyrant of their Stage, and their Dramatic Authors have forced it into Subjects not only where it was improper, but where I thought it impossible it should have Place.

Mr. *Corneille*, by adapting the *OEdipus* of *Sophocles* to the *French* Stage, has altered the Originals, and in Place of *Creon* has introduced *Theseus*, and given him a Mistress, that he may the more easily work up some whining Scenes. But before *Corneille*, I believe it never entered into any Man's Head, that it was proper to introduce Love into the *OEdipus* of *Sophocles*. Monsieur de *Voltaire*, in the same Tragedy of *Sophocles*, has not



imitated *Corneille*: He has not introduced any strange Characters into the Action, that they may talk of Love: However, not willing to be entirely defective in that Point, without which it is thought a Tragedy would be very unsuccessful, Mr. *Voltaire* has not indeed added a Woman more than is in the Original *Greek*, but he introduces *Philoctetes*, who he supposes was in Love with *Jocasta*, before she was married to *Laius*. And these two old Men, for surely they must have been old, are represented, as calling to Mind their past Amours.

Can we imagine that, in a Sacred Tragedy, the profane Love of *Polonides* should affect the Action of the Piece! In the Tragedy of the *Maccabees*, the young *Maccabee* loves a *Pagan* Woman, whom he wants to convert. That I may not run thro' all the Tragedies, I will close, by instancing in that of *Sertorius*, in the first Recounter of that old General with young *Pompey*, after the most serious and political Reflections upon the State of the Public. These two great Men finish this solemn Dialogue with a Dissertation on their Love-Intrigues. I believe in the first Place it will not be unnecessary to examine the Effects which this kind of Love produces in Tragedy; and this will deserve an entire Chapter.



*Of the Effects which Love produces  
in FRENCH TRAGEDY. The  
Cutting of the Choruses, and the  
Introduction of Confidants.*

**R**OMANTIC Love generally takes up three Fourths of the Action in *French* Tragedies. If we take away the tender Scenes, and reduce the principal Action to its true Object, the Tragedy would be ended in an Act and a Half, or two Acts at most. For Example, let us take out of *Nicomedes* the ten Scenes of *Laodice*; out of the *OEdipus*, the six Scenes of *Dirce*; out of *Poleuetes*, the Love-Scenes of *Severus*; from the *Phedra* of *Racine*, the six Scenes of *Arícia*; and we shall see that the Action will not only be uninterrupted, but that it will be more lively and brisk; and thus it plainly appears that these tender Scenes serve only to damp the Actions of the Piece, and to render the Heroes insipid and little. If, after these two best Writers of *French* Tragedy, we examine others, this Truth will be more plain: But when Love is the Subject of the Tragedy, that Passion, which in itself is so interesting, enters into the Action with

Propriety

Propriety enough. It is generally thought in *France*, that a Tragedy without Love could never please the *French* Ladies who compose the Bulk of the Audience in *Paris*. However, about the Beginning of the Year 1716, when the Players first acted *Athalie*, it had a great Success; and in the *OEdipus* of Mr. *Voltaire*, which had universal Applause, the only thing which was disliked was the Recital of the Loves of *OEdipus* and *Jocasta*. Notwithstanding these Examples, they never have recovered themselves from this Practice. They are willing to preserve Love in Tragedy; and I believe I can guess the Reason. The Disposition of a Fable is not easy; there must concur in it all the Steps of an Action in Life, the Beginning, the Progress, the Plot, the Unravelling, and the End. Half a Dozen Love Scenes help these insensibly forward; thro' these we must march for the right Conduct of an Action; and by making up these Blanks, you are made to jump insensibly from the Beginning to the Middle, and from the Middle to the End. By lopping off what I have mentioned, by taking the Love Scenes out of many Tragedies, which may be done without interrupting the Action, we can easily point out this Truth, and then will see the dangerous Jumps that Authors must otherwise be obliged to make in the Conduct of their Plays: I had a great Pleasure

sure in making this Experiment. I propos'd to my Companions the Plan of a Comedy which might comprehend all the Dramatic Entertainments in *Paris*: The Proposal was relish'd, and in a little time three of them undertook to execute it: After the Prologue, we had an Act of Comedy in the *Italian* Manner; the second Act was a Tragedy, and the third a comical Opera. The Sketch of the Tragedy was given by me, and the three Authors executed in such a manner, as to do them Honour, I speak of the *Arcagambis*, which was acted with Applause, and of which it is needless for me to give any Account as it is in Print. In one Act we see a complete Action; the Princess *Thamira* takes up but one Scene; and if any Scholar will weave into that Action ten Love Scenes betwixt *Thamira*, the King, the Prince, and the Nurse; I say, if this shall be done handsomely, with some distant Relation to the Subject, one shall be surpriz'd to see a complete Tragedy of five Acts grow up without any other Difficulty.

I own that when the *Arcagambis* was played, I had a complete Pleasure: I was complemented by every Body upon that Comic-Tragedy; and what was most surprizing, was to see all the Parts and Degrees of a complete Tragedy in five Acts. To tell the Truth, Sir, I was not a little proud of  
of



of the Merit of having reduced into one Act the entire Notion of a Tragedy, and can perform the same Operation upon other Originals which I could mention, purely by cutting off the Love Scenes.

When Tragedy was reformed in *France*, the Chorus and the *Choriphee* was cut off. The *Choriphee* is the Chorus that enters into the Action, and speaks along with the Actors. They have thought that this Part was useless to Tragedy, and void of Probability: And indeed upon the Plan of *French* Tragedy they may be in the right; for most Part of their Tragedies are upon private Subjects transacted in the Palaces of Princes, where Choruses are certainly introduced absurdly, and against Probability. But they found themselves at a Loss by thus cutting off the *Chorus* and the *Choriphee*: Therefore, to supply the Absence of the latter, their Authors have had Recourse to Romance; they have taken from the Character of the 'Squire the Idea of a Confident, either Male or Female, who are linked to, and attending their principal Personages.

It is true that in the *Alexander* and the *Athalia* of *Racine* there are none of these Confidents. But I don't think that this was the Effect of any Scruples that arose in the Mind of that excellent Poet on this Point; but owing to both the prophane and sacred  
History

History furnishing a Sufficiency of principal Characters, without the Authors being obliged to have Recourse to Fiction to help him out with Conduct. His *Andromache* convinces one of this Truth : For if he had entertained the least Scruples on this Head, he never would have given a Confident to *Andromache* and *Hermione*, nor a Tutor to *Pyrrhus*, three Characters quite useless in the Play : As for *Orestes*, the Author was so happy, that he found a *Pylades*, furnished by History, to his Hand.

By taking away the *Chorus* and the *Choriphee* from Tragedy, and introducing Confidents, I am mistaken if the Authors, by endeavouring to avoid a small Inconveniency, have not fallen into a considerable one. For their Heroes, in Imitation of *Cyrus* and *Orondates*, and other romantic Captains, make Confidents not of Noviciates in the Art of Knighthood, as 'Squires were, but often of a Slave to whom they entrust not only their Loves, but even the most delicate Plots. Often this Confident is brought upon the Stage with no other end but to hear and explain that Subject, and is quite useless thro all the rest of the Play.

of



*Of the Unity of Place in* FRENCH  
TRAGEDY.

**T**HE chief Point that is mentioned, with regard to Dramatic Performances, is the Observation of the three Unities in Tragedy and Comedy, I mean those of *Action, Time, and Place*: These direct us to judge of the true Merit of Tragedy and Comedy. *Aristotle*, in his Poetry, has not mentioned the Unity of Place; but the Nature of the thing alone has suggested the Reasonableness of it to Dramatic Poets: When *Aristotle* confined the Action of a Tragedy to twelve or twenty four Hours, the Unity of Place was absolutely necessary for so short a time, for it can't be supposed that the Action in that time can measure a great deal of Ground.

Besides, in the Infancy of Tragedy, the Representation was very simple: It had no Machines, no shifting of Decorations, yet these Shiftings are necessary for aiding the Imagination of the Spectator when the Place is changed. The first Actors therefore were obliged to make Choice of Subjects that were transacted upon one Spot of Ground.

These

These Entertainments having pleased the People, and the principal Citizens of every Republic being fond of encreasing their Magnificence, Machines, and Decorations, were introduced; but these Decorations served only to adorn the Scene, and not to shift it: As to the Machines, they were useful for the Gods who were introduced into the Place of the Action which never was changed: Thus we find there are no Shiftings of the Stage in *Sophocles* or *Euripides*.

It will be doubtless objected to me, that the Learned in Antiquity assure us there were Shiftings of the Stage. To prove this, *Bullanger* and *Lelius Geraldus* quote this Verse from the third Book of *Virgil's Georgics*,

*Vel Scena ut Versus discedat frontibus.*

I agree with them, that in the Entertainments of the Ancients there were Changes of Decoration; and I know that *Servius*, in his Note upon this Passage of *Virgil*, says, *But the Construction of the Scene was such, that it could be either quite changed, or drawn aside. It was said to be changed, when by the Help of Machines a quite different Face of the Picture was presented. It was on the other hand only said to be drawn aside, when by opening the Curtains, a concealed Picture was here and there exposed to them.*



It is nevertheless certain that we have no ancient Tragedy, the Subject of which requires a Shifting of the Scene. These Changes of Decoration were therefore only made at the End of the Representation of a Piece, when they wanted to represent another : For it was customary to make a Piece of a comic or a mimic Nature succeed a Tragedy ; and often in one Day three or four different Shews succeeded one another on the same Theatre.

Some may perhaps take the Opening of a Door, by which a Messenger enters, or that Part of the *Asinaria* of *Plautus*, where the Father, the Son, and the Mistress, are seen at Table together, as a Change of the Theatre. But upon an accurate Examination of the Matter, one will easily perceive, that these different Changes of the Theatre, spoke of by *Servius*, do not take Place in these two Instances.

In my Catalogue, when speaking of the Olympic Theatre of *Palladio*, in the City of *Vicenza*, I have given *Vitruvius's* Account of the Construction of Theatres. The Theatres had three principal Doors, and two on that Side where the Actors entered. Every one of these Doors fronted different Streets, and different Buildings ; and when in the Action a Stranger or a Messenger was to enter the City, they opened one of the two last mentioned

mentioned Doors, so that without any Change of the Theatre, the Spectators, through that Door, saw the City itself. In the same manner in the *Asinaria* they opened one of these two Side-Doors which presented to the View of the Spectators the Gallery of the House, where the Actors sat eating at a Table. But to return ; by long Custom the Unity of the Place had become so common among the *Greeks*, that there was no Occasion for prescribing it formally, since it was authorized by Practice, and always presumed to be understood. The Moderns have not followed this Probability ; but not to name them all, I shall only instance in *Calvaret*, who, probably being no Stranger to the Objections made to his Predecessor, upon this Account, has endeavoured to avoid this Fault, by putting these Words under the List of his *Dramatis Personæ*, in the Tragedy called the *Rape of Proserpine*. *The Scene is in Heaven, in Sicily, and in Hell, where the Imagination of the Reader may represent to itself a kind of Unity of Place, by conceiving this Scene to be a perpendicular Line drawn from Heaven to Hell.* To remedy so monstrous an Absurdity, the Critics, who have wrote since that Time, have laid down a positive Rule for this Unity of Place, which was only formerly consequentially deduced from the Rules so judiciously established by *Aristotle*. They have, as formally,

mally, required the Unity of Place as *Aristotle* did that of Action and Time, that by this Means the Sallies of the Poets Imagination might have some Check. But the late Tragic Poets following this Rule of the Unity of Place more servily than their Predecessors, have perhaps paid too religious a Regard to it. Is it not strange that the Place where a Tragedy is acted should be the Closet of an Emperor or a King; and that the Action of this Tragedy should be the Intrigues and Secrets of a Conspiracy wrought up and concerted under the Eyes of the very Prince intended to be murdered? Would not one be rather tempted to admit of a Change of Place, as the *Italians* have done since the Year 1600, in their Imitations of, and Translations from the *Spanish* Theatre.

The late Commentators on *Aristotle* are seriously employed in discovering whether this Unity of Place is to be understood of the *Extent of Ground taken up by the Actors at the Beginning of the Tragedy*, or of the *Town or City where the Action is laid*. But without stopping to discuss their several Reasonings in this Place, we shall in few Words lay before the Reader our own Sentiments of the Matter.

The first of all the Rules, and that which *Aristotle* lays down as the Basis and Foundation of all the rest, is to *observe Probability*.

Thus

Thus neither the Unity of Place, nor any of the rest of *Aristotle's* Maxims ought to be followed at the Expence of Probability, which is the Source of all the Rules observed in Poetry; and I don't think that this Probability is sufficiently observed in the Unity of Place so scrupulously adhered to by the *French* Poets.

The Spectators, in my Opinion, would be less shocked by seeing the Actors pass from one Apartment to another in the same Palace, (as in *Italy* and *Spain* was the Custom in the last Age,) than by seeing a Conspiracy concerted and carried on in the Closet, and under the Eye of the Tyrant who was to fall the Victim.

Let us, for instance, take one of the best Tragedies of the excellent Mr. *Corneille*, and examine the Effects of that great Man's scrupulous Attachment to the Rule prescribing the Unity of Place. Let no one charge me with an Intention to criticise upon him; I only intend to shew, that by straining Things less, he should have preserved Probability more, and that if he has given Occasion for Criticism, it is owing to his being over-cautious in this respect.

In his Tragedy of *Cinna*, the Place of Action is the Emperor's Closet; and it is in the same Closet that *Æmilia* bawls out that she will kill the Emperor. In the same Clo-



let *Cinna* concert the Conspiracy with *Æmilia* and *Maximus*. After the Conversation betwixt *Augustus*, *Cinna*, and *Maximus*, the Emperor has scarce left the Closet, till *Cinna* tells *Maximus*, That if he had advised *Augustus* not to throw up the Empire, it is with a View that his Victim may be the more illustrious, and that he may kill *Augustus* on the Throne. If the Conspirators, during all the Action, run a risque of being heard, they run still a greater upon this than upon any other Occasion; for the Emperor having just left them, could not be far gone, and might listen to know if they spoke the same in his Absence, they had done in his Presence. It appears then contrary to all Probability to make them speak so loud immediately when the Emperor leaves the Room. The Poet himself has been sensible of this, and for that reason, he makes *Cinna* say, *Friend, we may be over-heard in this Palace*. But this Reflection comes too late: I don't know but the Spectators might have been better pleased with a Change of Place, than with so imprudent Conduct in such Persons as *Cinna* and *Maximus*. Mr. *Corneille*, in the Examination of this Tragedy, endeavours to defend himself against this Objection, which had probably been made against his Tragedy in his own Life-time: His Words run thus: *It is true, it has two Places of Action; the*  
*one*

*one Half is acted with Æmilia, and the other in the Closet of Augustus. I should have justly deserved to be ridiculed, had I made this Emperor deliberate with Maximus and Cinna whether he should abdicate the Empire, precisely in the Place where Cinna informs Æmilia of the Conspiracy which he has formed against him.*

According to Mr. Corneille's Confession, the famous Deliberation betwixt *Augustus*, *Cinna*, and *Maximus*, happens in the Closet of the Emperor; and the Emperor leaves them there, when he says, *Adieu, I will carry the News to Livia.*

And it is in the same Closet that *Maximus* and *Cinna* held the imprudent Conference we have just now mentioned. *Corneille* does not allow us to imagine that they had gone out of it into the Apartment of *Æmilia*, or anywhere else, since he makes *Cinna* say, at the End of the Scene, *My Friend, we may possibly be over-heard in this Palace; and we speak perhaps with too much Imprudence in a Place so improper for communicating our Secrets. Let us remove.* They remained then in the same Closet; and all we have said of the Want of Probability in their Conference, continues in its full Force; and Mr. *Corneille* could not remedy this without shifting the Scene of Action.

But let us return to what Mr. *Corneille* says

upon the Place of Action, agreeable to the Principles which he lays down in the Examination we have just now mentioned. All the first Act ought to pass in the Apartment of *Æmilia*; all the second, in the Closet of *Augustus*; and as for the third, it seems to stand in need of a third Place. Is it proper that *Maximus* and *Euphorbus* should talk to one another in the Closet of *Augustus* concerning the Conspiracy against the Emperor? Or that in the Apartment of *Æmilia*, *Maximus* should talk to *Euphorbus* of his Love to her; and that *Euphorbus* should advise him to abandon the Conspiracy, and betray *Cinna*? Mr. *Corneille* must then have another Apartment to preserve Probability. The three first Scenes of the fourth Act, betwixt *Augustus*, *Euphorbus*, and *Livia*, necessarily pass in the Closet of the Emperor: At the End of the third Scene the Stage is empty; and the fourth Scene passes betwixt *Æmilia* and her *Confident*, without any thing bringing them on the Stage. For this Reason Mr. *Corneille*, in his Examination, says that this Scene, and all the rest of the Act, passes in *Æmilia*'s Apartment. But how is the Spectator acquainted with this Change of Place? Does he not always see the same Decoration? He is then unavoidably shocked with two Blunders, *viz.* The Emptiness of the Scene, and the hearing *Æmilia*, *Fulvia*, and *Maximus*

*mus* talk to one another of the Conspiracy in the very Place from which *Augustus* and *Euphorbus* had but just come. The Change of Decoration would have remedy'd the former of these Faults ; but the latter is irreparable. What ought we to conclude from all this? Why, that there are some Actions which, on account of their continual Change of Place, are not proper for the Theatre ; and that if one might, without offending Probability, admit this particular Change of Place, it is still necessary to acquaint the Spectators of it by a Change of Decoration ; for perhaps it is not sufficient to make the Actors tell that they have changed the Place, as when *Chiméne*, in the *Cid*, testifies to *Roderick* her Surprise at seeing him in her House. This Discourse is contradicted before the Spectators, by the Decoration which represents to them all along the same Royal Palace. *Racine* has made an admirable Use of the Change of Decoration in his *Athalie*, which I look upon as the Master-piece of Dramatic Poetry. The Place of Action for this Tragedy is the Porch of the Temple ; and when the Poet wants to shew the King on his Throne, surrounded with his armed *Levites*, he has no more to do but to open the Doors of the Temple: This deserves the Name of an ingenious Observation of the Rules, and a faithful Adherence to Probability.



bility. In this respect he has imitated the *Greeks*, who disposed their Theatre in the Manner which best suited the Natures of their Pieces. Thus *Sophocles*, in his *OEdipus, the Tyrant*, standing in need of the King of *Thebes* Palace, and an Altar, choose for the Scene of Action the public Place in which the Altar and the Palace of the King were built. *Guarini*, in his *Pastor Fido*, has likewise ordered his Theatre in such a Manner, that without any Change of Decoration, the Spectators see the Temple on the Top of the Mountain, the Grotto at the Foot of it, and the Valley where all the Scenes pass.



*Of the Unity of TIME, and the  
Unity of ACTION in FRENCH  
TRAGEDIES.*

THE *French* are not always exact Observers of the Unity of Time, or in other Words, of the Rule enjoining twenty four Hours for the time of the Action: To prove this, I might produce many Examples; but for Brevity-sake, shall only take notice of the *Horatii*. This Tragedy begins the very Moment in which one would think the *Roman* and *Alban* Armies were just about to engage

engage one another; and the first Scene represents to us the Anxiety of the *Sabines*, about the Event of the Battle. At the End of the first Act, *Curatius* comes to inform *Camilla* that there was to be no Engagement, since the contending Parties had agreed to single out, from their respective Nations, three Combatants, who were to fight for the common Cause. The Difficulty that now remained, was to know who were the most proper Persons to be made Choice of. The *Romans* choose the *Horatii*: The *Albans* the *Curatii*. Preparations are made for the Combat; the People flock to the Camp; a Suspension of Arms is agreed to; the Oracle is consulted; and by it the Choice of the *Romans* is applauded: The People return to the Camp; the Battle is fought; *Horatius* comes off victorious; he makes his Entrance into *Rome*; the People receive him with Acclamations, and welcome him with Shouts of Joy. He goes into his own House; he kills his Sister. The King pays a Visit to *Old Horatius*, whose Son *Valerius* accuses of having murdered his Sister. *Horatius* pleads the Cause of his Son; and the King acquits him. Thus the Tragedy ends. Without consulting *Titus Livius*, I believe we need only reflect on the Extent of Time which these Events may reasonably be supposed to take up, in order to be convinced that

that they could not happen in less than two or three Days.

With regard to the Unity of Action, I find a great Difference between the *Greek* and the *French* Tragedies; I always perceive with Ease the Action of the *Greek* Tragedies, and never so much as lose View of it; but in the *French*, I own I am often at a Loss to distinguish between the Action itself, and the Episodes with which it is intermixt. What, for instance, is the Action of the *Cid* of *Mithridates*, and of some others? In the *Cid*, *Roderick* kills the Father of his Mistress, puts the Enemies to Flight, has a Beating-bout with his Rival, obtains the King's Pardon, and the Hand of *Chiméne*. These are all the Events in the Piece; but which of them ought to be regarded as the principal one, or the main Action of the Tragedy? Is it the Pardon which *Roderick* obtains of the King? That Pardon is granted in the Middle of the Piece. Is it the Defeat of the *Moors*? That happens in the Interval betwixt the third and fourth Act. Is it, in fine, the Marriage of *Chiméne*? Not one of the Events of the Piece leads to that End.

*Mithridates* returns to rally his Forces, and march forth against *Rome*: He finds his Son in Love with *Monimia*, whom he himself was to marry. The *Romans* advance; *Mithridates* goes out to engage them: He  
returns

returns wounded ; and dying, orders the Marriage of *Monimia* and his Son.

Will any one say that the Death of *Mithridates* is the Action of this Tragedy ! But the Death of a Hero can never be the Subject of a Tragedy, unless the Poet direct every Part of his Piece to that particular End. The Death of *Britannicus*, for instance, is justly looked upon as the Action of that Tragedy, because the Author's Intention is by different Events to lead us on to this Catastrophe, upon which he all along fixes our Views ; but in *Mithridates*, what Circumstance, what Conspiracy makes us dread, or even expect the Death of that Prince ? There is nothing in *Mithridates* which fixes the Death of that Prince as the Subject of the Tragedy.

The Death of a Hero, or a Tyrant, may sometimes be the Hinge on which the Action turns ; or it may be the Effect and Result of it.

For instance, in the Tragedy of *Heraclius*, *Phocas* is killed, and the Action of the Piece is *the owning the rightful Successor to the Empire, and his Re-establishment upon the Throne* : To bring this about, *Phocas* is slain ; and in this Case the Death of the Tyrant is not *the Action itself*, but the *Effect and Result* of it.

In the *Death of Pompey*, *Pompey himself* is dead before the Tragedy begins ; and his  
Death



Death is, as it were, the Spring from which the whole of the Action flows. In this Case the Hero's Death is the Cause of the Action: The Death of the Count *de Gormas* produces several Actions in the *Cid*; but in *Mithridates*, the Death of the King is by no means either the Cause, or the Effect of the Action. As there would be no end of examining them all, I shall only say, that in the far greater Part of the *French* Tragedies, the Action is very often a Mystery, into which the Authors themselves cannot let the Spectators. This is far from being the Case with the *Greek* Tragedies; in them you discover the Action at first View.

In *OEdipus*, for instance, a Pestilence lays waste the City *Thebes*. On that Account the Oracle is consulted, who declares that the unavenged Murder of *Laius* is the Cause of all their Woes. Upon this *OEdipus* binds himself by an Oath to avenge it; a Scrutiny is made, and *OEdipus* is found at once to be the Son of *Laius*, and Murderer of his Father. This is the Subject of the *OEdipus*, and one will at first perceive the Action of this Tragedy, for every Part of the Actor's Conduct tends to discover the Murderer of *Laius*, and prepare the Woes of *OEdipus*.

After having spoke of these *French* Tragedies, in which it is not easy to perceive the true Action, let us now speak of those wherein

wherein the Unity of Action is not sufficiently observed, and where Matters are so ordered, as to force one to acknowledge two Actions.

I shall begin with *Andromache*, which is incontestably one of the finest of Mr. Racine's Pieces. The true Subject of this Tragedy is the Marriage of *Pyrrhus*: The Greeks charge *Orestes* to oppose it; but upon his Arrival at the Court of *Pyrrhus*, he finds himself sway'd by a more prevalent Interest than that of Greece, which was entrusted to him: His Love for *Hermione* makes him wish that *Pyrrhus* might marry *Andromache*: The Command of *Hermione* obliges him to kill *Pyrrhus*: The Passion which rages in the Breast of that Hero, his Fury, his Jealousy of *Hermione*, and in fine, his Death, are all Circumstances which interest the Spectators more than those relating to *Pyrrhus* and *Andromache*, and might of themselves make the Subject of a Tragedy. On the other hand, the Fate of *Andromache*, and the Love of *Pyrrhus* for her, are Subjects sufficiently interesting to supply a Poet with the Matter of a good Tragedy; and, upon Reflection, any one will easily see, that a Poet of Mr. Racine's Abilities, could have easily worked out his Tragedy without *Hermione's* being at the Court of *Pyrrhus*, and without assigning any other Interest to hinder the

the Marriage of *Orestes* with *Andromache*, than the Instructions given him by the *Greeks*: *Pyrrhus* would have had the same Struggle betwixt his Passion for *Andromache* and his Dread of drawing out against himself the united Forces of all *Greece*. *Andromache* in like manner would have appeared to us racked on Account of the Love she bore her Son, and by her Horror at a Marriage with the Murderer of *Priam's* Family, even the Son of that hated Man who murdered her Dear *Hector*.

If Mr. *Racine* had stuck by the Simplicity of this Subject, his Piece had been more regular and more moving; for it is not the Multiplicity of Interests that renders a Piece interesting; on the contrary, it interests more when one single Event, without any thing foreign or adventitious, attracts the whole of the Attention: Mr. *Racine* undoubtedly knew this well enough; but he has been forced to accommodate himself to the Genius of the Nation, which is chiefly touched with the Fate of Lovers in Dramatic Performances; and as it is absolutely necessary that Love should have a Part in all Subjects that are truly tragical, the Poets, who have brought these Subjects upon the *French* Theatre, have not only been obliged to make Use of Episodes for that Purpose, but often to work up these Episodes with  
more

more Care and Accuracy than the principal Subject of the Piece. Hence it is that there are so many Episodes in the *French* Tragedies. To this it is owing that the Personages in their Episodes interest the Spectator as much as the principal Hero of the Piece.

We may form a Judgment of this Affair from the *Severus* of *Poleucles*, the *Eriphile* of *Iphigenia*, the *Arícia* of *Pbedrus*, and from the Amours of *Theseus* and *Dircé* in the *OEdipus*.

If the Necessity of always introducing Lovers upon the *French* Theatre, has produced Faults in the Works of the greatest Masters, we may easily guess at the Fate of the inferior Class of Authors who have gone into this Practice; but to speak the Truth, this Usage has perhaps been of singular Service to help them to maintain and keep up their Dialogue, since there is no Passion that furnishes out a greater Number of *common-place Topics*, than that of Love.



## Of Character in the FRENCH TRAGEDY.

THE *French* Writers of Tragedy seem not to have been careful enough in marking the Differences as to the particular Species



Species of Heroism, peculiar to different Nations. The *Greek* Poets and Historians paint their Heroes grand, but for the most Part fierce and cruel. The *Roman* Heroes retain the same Grandeur, but it is heightened and set off by Humanity and Generosity.

In the *French* Tragedies, *Cæsar*, *Alexander*, *Pompey*, *Mithridates*, *Augustus*, and *Achilles*, seem all born under the same Climate, and trained up in the same Maxims.

Every Hero, besides the predominating Character of his Nation, ought to have one peculiar to himself: We know that *Pyrrhus*, the Son of *Achilles*, was impetuous and cruel; and that *Hippolitus*, the Son of *Theseus*, was savage, austere, and steel'd against the Impressions of Love; nevertheless, in *Racine's Phædra*, this *Hippolitus* is finical in his Sentiments, and blubbers for his dear *Aricia*; *Pyrrhus* is humbled, tender, and trembling at the Feet of *Andromache*; it may be answered, that if *Pyrrhus* is susceptible of Love, and submissive to his Mistress, there are certain Starts in which he discovers his true Character, and speaks with Haughtiness to *Andromache* herself. By attentively examining these Passages, we find that it is less the Fierceness of his Character which makes him talk in this harsh Manner to *Andromache*, than the Impatience which must be natural to every Lover in his Situation.

While

While his Mistress was continually bewailing the Loss of her Husband, and touched with the afflicting Remembrance of her Son's Situation, the most tender Lover would have said as much as *Pyrrhus* on a like Occasion; and it is not so much the Character as the Situation, that Mr. *Racine* has here followed. If this great Poet has so much altered two so remarkable Characters, what must we imagine others to have done?

That we may be able to view this Fault in a true Light, it will not be amiss to make some Observations upon Characters in general.

Every Man, and especially every Hero, has some predominant Branch of his Character, which gives a particular Stamp, if I may so say, to his Thoughts, and allows him to relish nothing but what is accommodated to it: If at any time he feels the Workings of these Passions which are common to Humanity, there is no Occasion for thinking that they are different in him, from what they are in other Men: The same Passions do not render different Men alike. On the contrary, the different Characters of Men give a different Turn to the same Passion in every individual Man. All Men may possibly be in Love, but every one is so in his own Way, and this Way depends upon the prevailing Part of his Character, which is more

or less influenced by these accidental Passions, as he is more or less able to resist their Impressions.

We find Examples of the just Combination of these Passions in some of the Tragedies of *Racine* and *Corneille*.

In the *Iphigenia* in *Aulis*, when *Achilles* is afraid of losing his Mistress, he does not abandon himself to vain Regrets: But that impetuous Hero, impatiently bearing the Superiority of *Agamemnon*, flies into a Passion, and threatens him even in the Presence of *Iphigenia*. *Prusias* excessively fond of his Wife, and giving himself up to be entirely managed by her, is deaf to the Calls of Nature in favour of his Son *Nicomedes*. Thus Love, which in *Achilles* meets with a fierce and haughty Character, allows him still to act agreeably to it: But finding in *Prusias* a Character where Sweetness and Condescension reign, it quite subdues him, and imparts all its Weaknesses to him. The two Poets have been equally happy in working up these two different Characters, and have observed all the Rules of Probability, which are but indifferently observed by the other Writers of *French* Tragedy, who bestow upon their Heroes that Gallantry and those Sentiments they have borrowed from Romances, without caring whether these Heroes would have loved in such a Manner,  
or



or whether their Method of loving be agreeable to the Characters which History and Fable give them.

I shall not spend time in running over all the Pieces of the modern Poets, to point out their Faults of this kind; we may easily apply to every one of these Pieces, what I have said concerning the prevailing Character of every Hero, and the proportionable Alterations which the Passions make in it.

I shall close this Chapter by observing that the Word *Character* is often improperly used. Most People find *Characters* where there are really none: Is there, for instance, a single Character in the *Cid*, except that of the Count *de Gormas*? In *Roderick* is there any other than that of *Cleopatra*? Is there *any at all* to be found in *Titus* and *Berenice*? In fine, in the *Horatii* I can only find two Characters marked, that of *Horatius*, and that of *Curatius*; and in *Cinna*, those of *Augustus* and *Æmilia*.

I don't pretend to give what I have said of the Character of these different *Pieces* as a formal Decision: I only let the Reader know what Impression they made upon myself; and perhaps what I have advanced may lay a Foundation for their being examined with greater Accuracy for the future. I have not taken upon me to criticise these Tragedies in which I find so small a Number of



Characters, a great Number of which are by no means necessary to denominate a Tragedy good. When the Action is simple, and turns upon one or two Personages, it is sufficient that their Characters be maintained and marked: Thus in *Roderick*, the Character of *Cleopatra* is sufficient for the Piece.



### *Of the Sentiments of the* FRENCH TRAGEDIES.

ONE of the six constituent Parts of Tragedy, according to *Aristotle*, is what the *Italians* call *Sentenza*: As I don't find a *French* Word which corresponds exactly to it, I shall in its stead sometimes use the Word *Sentiment*, and sometimes the Word *Maxim*.

The *French* Tragedies chiefly excel in this Point, which is the Rock on which those Authors split, who, by indulging the Fire of their Imagination too much, swerve from that *Probability*, which is the most solid Foundation of true and genuine *Beauty*.

Is it, for instance, probable that a Hero, amidst the Transports of the most violent Passion, should enter upon the most refined and abstract Speculations in *Metaphysics*?

This

This pretended Beauty produces an Effect quite contrary to the Intention of Tragic Poetry.

At the very Moment the Heart is touched with the deplorable Situation of a Hero, boiling with Fury and madden'd with Despair, there flows from his Mouth a Thought so delicate and refined, a Sentiment so little expected, and so much above the common Pitch, that it in some measure destroys the Sentiments of the Heart, by attracting the Attention of the Mind.

Read, for instance, in *Corneille*, the Discourse of *OEdipus* to *Dircé*, when he is found to be the Son of that same *Jocasta* whom he had married; and you will observe, that in order to express the Situation in which he is, he uses Thoughts so grand and noble, that they force our Applause, but at the same time weaken our Compassion. In the Tragedy entitled *The Death of Pompey*, *Cornelia* alone is capable of moving the Passions, and touching the Heart. Yet the noble Sentiments with which she so much abounds, both with regard to *Cæsar* and the Ashes of *Pompey*, are only capable of dazzling the Mind, but not of moving the Heart; the Spectators, instead of being touched with Pity, are struck with Admiration, which is far from being the End of Tragedy, in which the Skill of the Poet consists in hiding Art,

and shewing only Nature. The Sentiment of the Soul, expressed in a manner agreeable to one's Situation, is of itself sufficiently able to move the Spectators, which a studied Thought will never do.

If we observe in what manner *Sophocles* makes *OEdipus* speak, when he brings him upon the Stage, together with his two young Daughters, we will perceive that the real Situation of that misfortunate Hero, who was at once their Father and their Brother, is not in the least altered, or weakened by the *Wit* of the Poet. If Poets transgress the Rules of Probability, by putting into the Mouths of their Heroes, whose Circumstances demand the most natural Sentiments, too far-fetched Expressions, they are equally culpable if the Language they put into their Mouths is not suited to their Rank, Age, and Sex.

We must agree however, that Elevation of Sentiments admits of many Degrees, but the manner of Expression is different, according to the Difference of Age and Education. Many of the *Greek* and *Latin* Poets have been justly blamed for not having observed the Rules of Probability in the Language they put into the Mouths of their Characters; and the same Censure may be past, with Justice, upon *French* Writers of Tragedy; among them we often find Heroes,  
and



and their Confidents, Women and Children, talk in the same Strain, and equally show away with Maxims and Sentences. The *French*, who are naturally full of Wit, with Pleasure pursue that Part of Tragedy which we call *Sentiments*, and frequently sacrifice to it all other Considerations: In this they are encouraged by the Applause which a fine Maxim always gains from the Audience; and it has been known that a Tragedy has succeeded purely upon the Merit of the pretty Maxims that were scattered thro' it. But this Success has imposed upon Authors, who have not perceived that a Piece, which has no other Merit, has never a durable Reputation: If they want that their Pieces should be long-lif'd, let them apply themselves to the Conduct of the Fable; let them take care that that in itself, when stript of the Ornaments of Speech, shall be affecting and interesting for the Spectators; let them employ their Wit in the Observation of the Character and other Circumstances, and they shall then be sure to please for ever.

Thus it is that *Racine* has acquired immortal Fame. Some have imagined that he has not excelled in Sentiments, or pretty Sayings; but they make this Reflection because they don't observe that elevated Thoughts, which strike in other Writers, are formed in *Racine* in as great a Number as in other



Poets; but in these they strike more, because the Inequality of their Stile shews them in it a Contrast which is more dazzling. They are not so easily discerned in *Racine*, whose Stile is always equally noble, and his Expressions always just and natural, but never confounded with sounding Bombast; and this is the true Pattern of Stile. Let the *French*, who reproach the *Italians* with their *Concetti*, or Conceits, do Justice to themselves and the *Italians* both: To the *Italians*, by owning that these Conceits are not agreeable to their Men of Learning, and disapproved by them; and to themselves, in guarding against a Fault for which they blame the *Italians*, and which is become but too common among modern Writers: It is true, it is less frequent among good Authors, and I will instance two in *Racine* himself, which are as absurd as any among the *Italians*.

*Pyrrhus*, in the *Andromache*, Act I. Scene IV. says,

*I feel those Ills that I have dealt to Troy  
Vanquish'd and bound, consumed with fruitless  
Plaints,  
Burnt with more Fires than those I kindled  
there.*

I

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† See likewise an Instance of this kind from the same Author in Page 258.

I have quoted these Passages of *Racine*, not so much with any Design to reflect on that great Man who has so rarely been faulty in this respect, as to shew how much we ought to guard against these bombast Sentiments, since they so easily insinuate themselves into the Writings of the greatest Masters.

I believe I have said enough on this Subject, because it will be easy for the Reader to apply these Observations to the several Dramatic Performances he shall have Occasion to examine.



*Of the Intention of the French Tragic*  
POETS, and some REMARKS  
*upon FRENCH TRAGEDY.*

THE End of Dramatic Poetry is to please, and for this the Poets ought to conform themselves to the Taste of the Nation. Among the *Greeks*, the People having a great Share in the Government, nothing interested them so much as the Revolutions of Kingdoms: They were pleased to see the Passions drawn in such a manner as to occasion them, and to hear the Theatre adopt political Maxims. In the  
first

first Chapter we have seen that their Poets brought upon the Stage Subjects and Characters agreeable to their Genius. The *French*, contented with their happy Government, through a long Succession of Years under the wise Direction of their Princes, are less touched with Pictures resembling the Intrigues of Ambition: They with Joy behold Love and Jealousy keep Possession of their Stage; and Romances, which have had such a Run among them, have naturally led their Poets to represent that which they took a Pleasure in reading: This has given Rise to *French* Tragedy as we have it at present, where Love, in the Taste of Romance, possesses always the first Part; and this predominant Passion may be looked upon as the Characteristic of their Tragedy, which distinguishes it from that of *Greece* and *Italy*.

Perhaps it were to be wished that they could put into the Mouths of some other Heroes, besides those of *Greece* and *Rome*, who were of so opposite a Character, Sentiments of Tenderness and Love: Why may they not make their Princes represent Dramatic Heroes, as the *English* have done? But don't let us insist too much on this Point, for it would carry us too much out of our Way; only we may observe that their Poets having given them *French* Sentiments, have thought fit to give them even *French* Civility.

Thus

Thus on the Head of *Achilles*, or *Cæsar*, we see a Hat and a large *Nodding Plumage*, like those over a Canopy, and Strangers who are not used to see these Heroes so burlesqued, can't help calling them Monsieur *Cæsar*, and Monsieur *Achilles*.

Don't let us blame the *French* Poets, but rather the Taste of the Spectators, who could be pleased with nothing but these Pictures of Jealousy and Love: To this alone are owing the Faults which we have taken Notice of in the Works of their great Masters; such as their failing, in the Unity of Place, as in *Cinna*; of Action, as in the *Andromache*; of having so strongly altered Characters, as in the *Cid*; in short, of introducing upon the Stage, Confidants, those eternally cold and insipid Characters.

|| If I ever shall have the Happiness of knowing the *English* Stage, I shall inform you of my Sentiments of it; at present I shall speak of their Tragedy of *Cato*, which has been translated into our Language, and acted upon our Stage with Applause. For my own Part I am of Opinion, that in this Play may be found the true Plan of a well conducted Conspiracy, and the Language of a Hero who still thinks nobly, but within the Compass of Nature. *Cato* is greater than  
all



all Heroes either ancient or modern, yet I still know him to be a Man. It may be objected that it is unnatural to represent *Cato* as denying to shed a Tear for the Death of his Son; but I affirm that there is no Point in which the Character of *Cato* is better sustained, without his deviating from Nature. *Cato* surrounded with the thin Remains of the Senate, must have discouraged them had he given any Proof of Weakness. But even tho' he had been by himself, perhaps he might not have shed Tears, for these don't always accompany Grief, and agree ill with the Character of *Cato*; but if we examine the Sentiments of the *English Cato* upon this Occasion, we shall find them both great and tender in the highest Degree at the same time.

I don't speak here of the Underplot containing the Loves of *Cato's* Son and *Lucia*, and *Juba* with *Marcia*; these I disapprove of, as not immediately affecting the Subject of the Play; but probably the Necessity of introducing Women put him under another, that of making them *young*, and therefore he could find no other Business for them upon the Stage but Love. It is to be hoped that if the *English* and *Italians* follow the fine Models that are before them, they will give the World good Plays. I likewise flatter myself that the *French* Audiences will lose the Taste  
for

for these swelling Thoughts which stun the Mind, and shock the Understanding. They begin already to set up against the Impieties and the infernal Politics, and licentious Maxims, which some Moderns have derived from polluted Sources, which have only a false Appearance of Greatness. Then shall we have less Love upon the Stage, the Manners and Characters better preserved, the Unities observed, and the Sentiments and fine Thoughts used on proper Occasions.

But I do not expect to see Rhime banished from the Theatre; a Man must be a *Frenchman*, and from his Infancy have his Ears accustomed to the Return of Rhime, otherwise they must be grated by its continual Monotony, not only of Rhime, but of the Period, which always takes up the Space of two. This Form, which never alters, produces on your Mind the same Effect that the Billows of the Sea do upon your Eye: These at first please the View, but afterwards fatigue it, and the Spectator turns his weary Eye to the Shore for Relief.

F I N I S.





[N. B. *The following Catalogue should have been plac'd immediately after the Account of the German Theatre.*]

*Tragedies and Comedies of* § HANS-  
SACH from 1516, till 1558.

<i>Adam and Eve.</i>	<i>Palidis.</i>
<i>Virginia.</i>	<i>The Prodigal Child.</i>
<i>Guesmund.</i>	<i>Juno and Jupiter.</i>
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<i>The Two Gentlemen of Burgundy.</i>	<i>The Folly of Erasmus.</i>
<i>The False Empress.</i>	<i>The Judgment of Paris.</i>
<i>The Innocent Empress.</i>	<i>Plautus's Menechmes.</i>
<i>The Elizabeth.</i>	<i>Henno.</i>
<i>The Unequal Children of Eve.</i>	<i>The Half Friends.</i>
<i>Jacob and Esau.</i>	<i>The Queen of France.</i>
<i>Esther.</i>	<i>The Banish'd Empress.</i>
<i>Tobias.</i>	<i>Mucius Scevola.</i>
<i>The Messias.</i>	<i>Oliver and Artus</i>
<i>Griselda.</i>	<i>The Chevalier Galmi.</i>
<i>The Miser and the Gentleman.</i>	<i>The Biancessora.</i>
	<i>The Violanta.</i>

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§ This Poet died in 1567, in the 81st Year of his Age; his Works have been printed at Nuremberg in 1570.

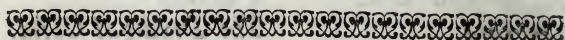
*Dramatical*





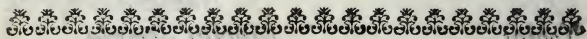
## Dramatical Pieces of MARTIN OPITZ.

<i>Daphne.</i> <i>The Antigona of Sophocles.</i>	<i>The Trojans of Seneca.</i> <i>Judith.</i>
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## Dramatical Pieces of ANDREW GRYPHIUS.

Tragedies.	Comedies.
<i>Leo of Armenia.</i> <i>Katharine of Georgia.</i> <i>Cardenio and Celinda.</i> <i>Charles Stewart.</i> <i>The Death of Papinian.</i> <i>The Constant Mother.</i> <i>The Gibeonites.</i>	<i>The Nurse.</i> <i>The Wandering Shepherd.</i> <i>Piaſta.</i>  <i>Farces.</i> <i>Petez Squens.</i> <i>Horribilicribrifax.</i>



## Dramatical Pieces of LOHENSTEIN.

<i>Cleopatra.</i> <i>Sophonisba.</i> <i>Ibraim Baſſa.</i>	<i>Agrippina.</i> <i>Epiccharis.</i>
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F I N I S.





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